

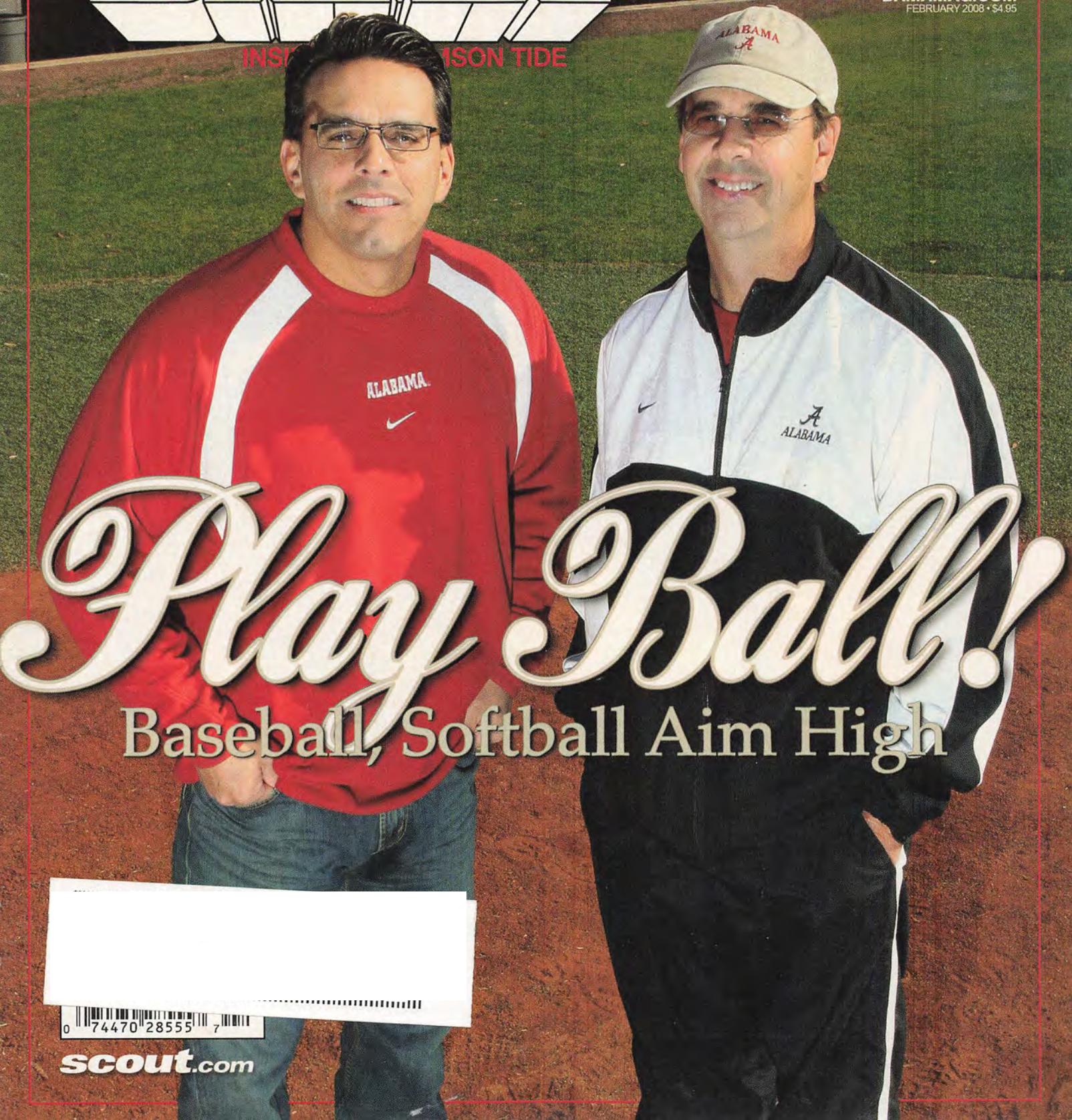
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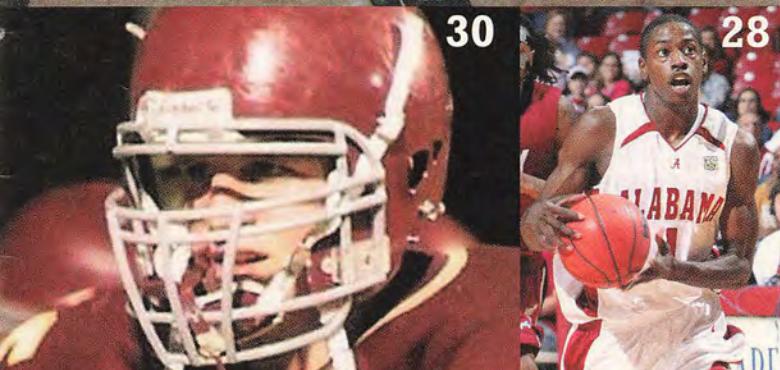
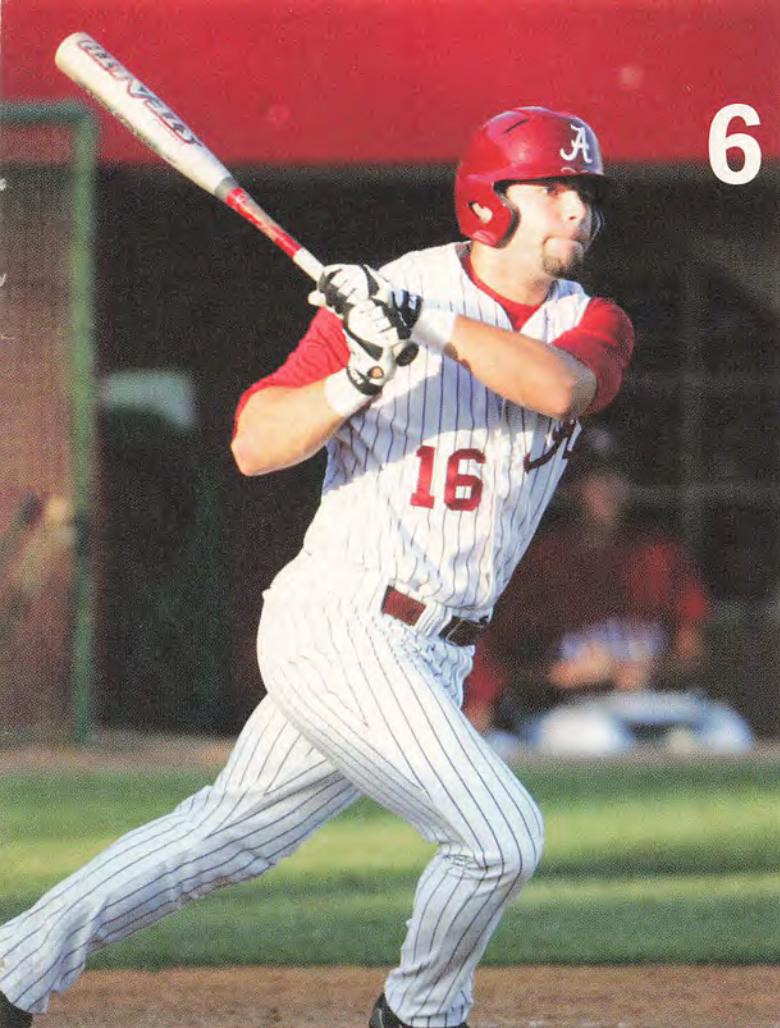


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'BAMA

INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

February 2008

Volume 30 • Issue Six

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Cover photo of Softball Coach Patrick Murphy (left) and Baseball Coach Jim Wells by Kent Gidley

Letter from the Editor

Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

It's not easy being Alabama. That's not to say it's better to be something else. Far from it. Being Alabama means the bar is set higher. Football, you're thinking. Yes, in football Bama rules. And we've pointed out in the past that in basketball the Crimson Tide trails only Kentucky in Southeastern Conference tradition. Baseball? Bama's right at the top. Alabama softball is a relatively new sport, but the Crimson Tide ranks among the nation's powerhouses.

In gymnastics, Alabama is one of a half dozen teams that can truly be considered a national title contender.

Men's golf now rates as a national championship contender and women's golf is headed that way. Over the years Alabama has been strong in track and field, swimming and diving, tennis, volleyball, et al.

We notice that others are obsessed with Alabama. We smirk at their contention Bama lives in the past.

We do take pride in the past. We've also prepared for the future, primarily through the Crimson Tradition Campaign established by Athletics Director Mal Moore to upgrade facilities. We believe the right coaches are in place.

At the very top, President Robert E. Witt has taken The University to extraordinary heights in facilities, enrollment, academics, and morale.

The hollow feeling comes from disheartening results in competition. There's nothing to be gained by a head-in-the-sand attitude. Facts are that Alabama has had some horrendous results. A football loss to Louisiana-Monroe. A basketball loss to Belmont.

Alabama doesn't live in the past, but history can play a part in future success. Alabama's tradition is part of its greatness. Another ingredient in a return to that greatness will be to learn from past disappointments.

There are a lot of advantages in Tuscaloosa. That doesn't mean it's easy being Alabama, but there's nothing wrong with great expectations.

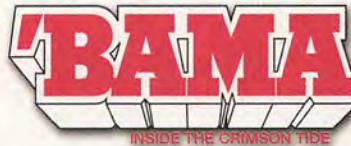
Expectations go beyond those of the fan base. When Alabama lost to Mississippi State in football last fall, there was a question about quarterback John Parker Wilson, who had thrown a critical interception. Football Coach Nick Saban pointed out that the mistake hurt no one more than it did the player.

As much as Crimson Tide success means to those of us who follow Bama, it means more to those who coach and play the games. To be in contact with those coaches and players is to be convinced they are determined to do the things that will lead to success.

Sincerely,
Kirk McNair
Editor

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2008

Crimson Tide Preview

Wells confident Alabama will be improved

Alabama Baseball Coach Jim Wells took advantage of the new NCAA rules regarding fall baseball and the number of practices now allowed for all Division I teams.

Wells put the Crimson Tide through a 45-day, 18-scrimmage fall schedule that allowed his team to improve in all areas and the 14-year head man is confident his team will be much better than the 2007 squad that finished the year with a 31-26 record and did not make the NCAA Regional Tournament.

The 2008 squad will be an entirely different team, Wells said, although many veterans will be leading the way.

"The players played hard," Wells said following fall drills. "There were some ups and downs. We feel like we got accomplished the majority of things we wanted to get accomplished in that period of time and we would not have been able to do that without the extra practice time. We have an idea of who can play. Now it's getting them in the right position and getting them more reps. We have more depth than we have had because of all the returning position players and some of the players aren't front-line players that have been in the program three, four or five years."

Wells knew that would be an advantage in 2008. "I knew last spring we had a shot, because we had so many guys coming back," Wells said. "Our position players are intact and we have added several guys. The guys like (freshman infielder Ross) Wilson and (freshman infielder Josh) Rutledge are really good players. The experience is there and so therefore everything you do in practice, everyone knows it."

A major reason for the letdown in 2007 came behind the plate as the Tide struggled to find consistent play at the catcher position. Wells is convinced that will not be the case this season with six catchers on the 2008 roster. The coach said three catcher prospects made significant progress in the fall.

Alabama will open the season with juniors Alex Avila (Pembroke Pines, Fla.), Mike Sharp (Liberty, Mo.) and Vin DiFazio (Hampton, N.J.) vying for the starting position.

Avila made the switch from infielder to catcher last summer when he caught in the Cape Cod League and spent some time at home with his father, Al, and the Detroit Tigers. Al is the Assistant



University of Alabama

General Manager and Vice President with the Tigers and Alex was able to spend some time this summer with one of the game's best backstops, Ivan Rodriguez. Sharp came to Alabama in August from Kansas City Community College, where he was a solid starter behind the plate. Wells said Sharp improved his game during the fall.

DiFazio, who was brought in to be Alabama's catcher last season, seems to be recovered from his viral nerve infection that sidelined him in 2007. He was able to practice towards the latter part of the fall. The addition of DiFazio could really bolster the position.

"I think it's a good move for Avila," Wells said. "He is very excited and has taken to it well. Mike Sharp is a guy we signed late and he has done well also. We have gone from having no catchers to six, but I think Avila has put himself in a good position if he keeps improving, to be a front-line guy."

"He brings a lot to the table. He knows the game and he communicates well with the pitchers. (Assistant coach) Dax Norris has done a great job with him. He wants to play. He wants to do well. He is very motivated. He knows that is the position for him."

Avila also brings a bat. Last year he hit .296 and led the Tide in home runs with 14, runs batted in with 61 and doubles with 15. He had a team leading 127 total bases and Bama best .570 slugging percentage.

Juniors Kyle Moore (Wetumpka) and Brian Clark (Indianapolis, Ind.) and sophomore Brock Bennett (Tucker, Ga.) will also seek playing time behind the plate.

The Crimson Tide returns the majority of its infield and the defense should be solid.

Senior Matt Bentley (Hazel Green) returns for his second season at first base and will be backed up by junior Wes Henderson (Oxford) and Avila. Sophomore Jake Smith (Shannon) also returns

for his second year as the Tide's third baseman. Junior transfer Cole Shelton (Dyersburg, Tenn.) will serve as Smith's backup.

Sophomore Brandon May (Marietta, Ga.), who started last year as a true freshman, is back for his second year as the Tide's second baseman. Freshman Jon Kelton (LaGrange, Ga.) is listed as a backup to May at second base.

Bentley has the bat a team likes from its first baseman. Last year he batted .299 with 12 homers, nine doubles and 36 RBI.

Alabama had expected to have Cale Iorg back at shortstop this year, but the former Bama all-star did not return after having been on a Mormon mission the past two years.

The battle for the starting shortstop position could come down to a pair of freshmen, Ross Wilson (Hoover) and Josh Rutledge (Cullman). Both can also play other positions and both will likely be in the Tide's opening day lineup. In addition to shortstop work, Wilson saw action this fall at second base, center field and catcher. Rutledge worked at second base and centerfield along with shortstop. Junior Jeff Texada (New Iberia, La.) will serve as a backup at both second base and shortstop.

"We have three of the four starters back," Wells said. "There is one guy (shortstop Greg Paiml) we have to replace. Texada, Wilson and Rutledge are all good players, so that will be a battle to the end. Rutledge is a key guy because he has had such a good fall and has been able to play well in any position you put him in. I think the addition of those two freshmen, who are really good athletes, gives you some maneuverability. Rutledge can play anything. Wilson can play anything."

"So the infield defense is good. Whether it's Wilson, May, Rutledge or Texada, they all field the ball and throw it to first base and turn double plays and we are going to need that because the ball is going to be put in play a lot."

The Crimson Tide has several talented and experienced outfielders entering the 2008 season, but must find a replacement for two-time All-America centerfielder Emeel Salem.

Juniors Kent Matthes (Orlando, Fla.), Tyler Odle (Mountain Brook) and Ryan Rhoden (Tuscaloosa) return along with sophomore Del Howell (Tuscaloosa) redshirt freshman Bryant Jones (Dacula, Ga.).

Matthes batted .307 with nine doubles, eight homers and 98 RBI and had some spectacular right field plays. Rhoden batted .291 and Howell .255.

The Crimson Tide added junior college transfer Alex Kubal (Shorewood, Minn.) as the candidate to replace Salem in centerfield.

Wilson, Rutledge and Texada also worked in

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centerfield this fall, giving the Tide several capable options in the outfield.

"Everybody is back, plus we added Kubal," Wells said. "He was brought in to be the centerfielder. He plays hard and he has improved. I feel comfortable with him going out there. We have looked at Rutledge and Texada in center, too. We will be fine there. To me, Rutledge and Wilson were big surprises this fall. They are really good players."

While the additional

practice time was a good thing for college baseball, not all NCAA rules have been favorable towards college baseball in recent memory. One major change is the mandatory start date for all Division I schools. Teams cannot begin practice until February 1, and may not play their first games until February 22. With two fewer weeks in the season, scheduling has become an issue, as teams will now play up to five games per week even during conference play.

A five-game week places even more importance on pitching at the collegiate level. The Crimson Tide enters the season with more depth than probably any team Wells has fielded, but also lacks the true number one starter to open a series.

"We are trying to develop a number-one type guy and we may not have that," Wells said. "We do have a lot of quality guys who throw strikes. Position-player wise, I thought we'd been fine and we are. Pitching-wise, we have more than we have had, just not a guy that stands out as that front-line guy, but it's still very early. They have shown the ability to throw strikes and that is the number one thing. The guys that can do that will pitch."

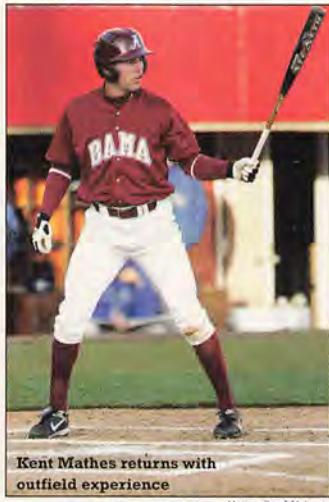
Alabama opens the season with 17 pitchers on its roster, including seven pitchers with significant mound experience. Senior Will Stroup (LHP, Birmingham) and juniors Miers Quigley (LHP, Roswell, Ga.) and Casey Kebodeaux (RHP, Mandeville, La.) have started SEC games in the past, while senior Josh Copeland (RHP, Palmetto, Ga.), junior Austin Hyatt (RHP, Marietta, Ga.) and sophomore Austin Graham (RHP, Hoover) have started games and have SEC experience.

The records of the returning players are not outstanding. Stroup was 3-1 with a 4.65 earned run average, Quigley 4-7 and 4.88, Kebodeaux 3-4 and 5.06, Copeland 1-2 and 2.97, and Hyatt 5-1 and 3.07.

With a minimum of five games a week, the Crimson Tide will need pitching depth and could need as many as a dozen pitchers through the course of the season.

A talented group of newcomers will help complete the Tide's rotation, beginning with transfers Jamie Manning (RHP, Empire), Patrick Nappi (Birmingham) and Robert Phares (Tuscaloosa). A trio of talented freshmen will also see action on the mound including Connor Hoehn (RHP, Damascus, Md.), Nathan Kilcrease (RHP, Phenix City) and Jimmy Nelson (RHP, Niceville, Fla.).

"We are in a position to have a better club this year," Wells said.



University of Alabama

"There is something to work with there and we have some flexibility."

"Nelson and Kilcrease were the two standouts, along with Howell. They will pitch this year for us in some role."

"Right now, the weekend starter-types would be Nelson, Hyatt, Quigley and Stroup. The closers would be Copeland and Kilcrease. Nelson could be a Friday night guy here pretty soon."

Another option on the mound is Howell, the Tide's lone two-way player who may have made the most progress of any UA player in the fall.

"Howell can play," Wells said. "He is better. He may evolve into someone that can start (on the mound), but my first instinct is to use him out of the pen. He had a really nice fall. He is one of those guys whose whole game improved."

Under new NCAA guidelines, Alabama was to resume individual drills on January 9, and team practice was set to begin February 1.

The Crimson Tide's 2008 home schedule includes Cal Poly, Troy, Youngstown State, Samford, New Orleans, Jacksonville State, UAB, Mississippi Valley State and Southeast Louisiana in non-conference action. The SEC home weekends include three-game series with Vanderbilt, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, Auburn and Florida.

Alabama is planning a number of special events for the 2008 season, including the 25th anniversary celebration of the 1983 World Series team, the 40th anniversary of Alabama's 1968 SEC Championship and the 60th birthday of Sewell-Thomas Stadium, which opened March 21, 1948 as Thomas-Field.

Avila Named To Watch List

Alabama junior catcher Alex Avila has been named to the 2008 Brooks Wallace Player of the Year Award Watch List, the College Baseball Foundation and Hall of Fame announced.

The Wallace Award is presented to the nation's top collegiate baseball player in conjunction with the College Baseball Hall of Fame's annual induction festivities. The 2008 award banquet will be held Thursday, July 3, in the United Spirit Arena on the campus of Texas Tech University.

Avila has appeared in 117 games in his career at Alabama and posted a .294 batting average with 19 home runs and 103 RBI. He has also added 79 runs scored, and 29 doubles. He made the move to catcher this fall after splitting time at first base, third base and designated hitter his first two seasons with the Tide.

The Pembroke Pines, Florida, native had his best season last year as a sophomore when he hit .296 (66-for-223) with 14 home runs and 61 RBI in 57 games. He also added 38 runs scored and 15 doubles for the Tide.

The Wallace Award is a dedication to the memory of the former Texas Tech player and assistant coach Brooks Wallace. Wallace was a slick-fielding shortstop at Texas Tech from 1977 to 1980. A four-year starter, he was named All-Southwest Conference and All-District his senior year. He led the Red Raiders to their first-ever appearance in the Southwest Conference Tournament in 1980. After playing two years in the Texas Rangers organization, he returned to Texas Tech and served as a graduate assistant and later as an assistant coach. In the summer of 1984, he was diagnosed with cancer and fought the disease courageously until his death on March 24, 1985, at age 27. The Plano, Texas native was married to the former Sandy Arnold and they had one daughter, Lindsay Ryan.

2008 Alabama Baseball Roster

No	Name	Pos	B/T	Hgt	Wgt	Class	Hometown
1	Kyle Moore	C	R/R	6-1	190	Junior	Wetumpka
2	Josh Rutledge	IF	R/R	5-11	175	Frosh	Cullman
3	Ross Wilson	IF	R/R	5-11	175	Frosh	Hoover
5	Alex Kubal	OF	R/R	5-10	170	Junior	Shorewood, Minn.
6	Brandon May	IF	R/R	6-0	200	Soph	Marietta, Ga.
7	Myers Quigley	P	L/L	6-5	220	Junior	Roswell, Ga.
9	Del Howell	P/OF	L/L	6-4	190	Soph	Tuscaloosa
10	Jeff Texada	IF	R/R	6-0	180	Junior	New Iberia, La.
11	Wes Henderson	IF	R/L	6-0	210	Junior	Oxford
13	Josh Copeland	P	R/R	6-1	240	Senior	Palmetto, Ga.
14	Jake Smith	IF	R/R	6-2	190	Soph	Shannon
15	Will Stroup	P	L/L	5-11	170	Senior	Birmingham
16	Alex Avila	C	L/R	5-11	210	Junior	Pembroke Pines, Fla.
18	Mike Sharp	C	R/R	6-1	180	Junior	Liberty, Mo.
19	Bryant Jones	OF	L/R	5-11	175	Frosh	Dacula, Ga.
20	Connor Hohen	P	R/R	6-2	210	Frosh	Damascus, Md.
21	Austin Evans	P	R/R	6-3	215	Frosh	Tampa, Fla.
22	Kent Matthes	OF	R/R	6-2	205	Junior	Orlando, Fla.
23	Tyler White	P	R/R	6-3	185	Frosh	Brandon, Miss.
24	Vincent DiFazio	C	R/R	6-1	210	Junior	Hampton, N.J.
25	Matt Bentley	IF	L/R	6-3	230	Senior	Huntsville
26	Robert Phares	P	R/R	6-1	190	Junior	Tuscaloosa
27	Austin Graham	P	L/R	6-2	195	Soph	Hoover
28	Nathan Kilcrease	P	R/R	5-5	150	Frosh	Phenix City
29	Patrick Nappi	P	R/R	5-11	190	Junior	Birmingham
30	Jason Garner	P	L/L	6-4	215	Junior	Trussville
31	Casey Kebodeaux	P	R/R	6-1	200	Junior	Mandeville, La.
32	Jamie Manning	P	R/R	6-2	185	Junior	Empire
33	Cole Shelton	C	R/R	6-2	220	Junior	Dyersburg, Tenn.
34	Ryan Rhoden	OF	R/R	6-1	225	Junior	Tuscaloosa
36	Austin Hyatt	P	R/R	6-4	200	Junior	Marietta, Ga.
39	James Tullidge	IF	R/R	5-11	170	Frosh	Tuscaloosa
40	Jimmy Nelson	P	R/R	6-6	210	Frosh	Niceville, Fla.
41	Brock Bennett	C	R/R	5-10	150	Soph	Tucker, Ga.
42	Jon Kelton	IF	L/R	5-11	175	Frosh	LaGrange, Ga.
43	Tyler Odle	OF	L/L	5-11	190	Junior	Vestavia Hills
44	Jarrod Hewes	P	R/R	5-11	195	Junior	Mobile
45	Brian Clark	C	R/R	5-8	180	Junior	Hammond, Ind.
46	Drew Clark	IF	R/R	6-1	230	Frosh	Muscle Shoals

HEAD COACH: Jim Wells

ASSISTANT COACHES: Mitch Gaspard and Dax Norris

2008 SEC Baseball Preview

League again should make major impact

The Southeastern Conference posted another tremendous season in 2007, sending five teams to NCAA postseason play with Mississippi State advancing to the College World Series. An SEC squad has now appeared in the College World Series 22 of the last 23 years. Vanderbilt won both the SEC regular-season title with a 22-8 conference record and the SEC Tournament on its way to a number one national ranking before being upset in NCAA Tournament play.

Scout Media went to its experts at each of the 12 SEC schools to put together preseason scouting reports for all the league teams. The team previews for each division are presented in alphabetical order.

SEC West Division

Alabama

By Kirk McNair

'Bama Magazine

The biggest factor in Alabama baseball going into 2008 is that Jim Wells is back for his 14th season as head coach. Last summer Wells announced his retirement, then abruptly changed his mind and returned to head the program where he has won 553 games, including winning six SEC Tournament championships and going to 10 NCAA Tournaments.

Talk of players has centered on one who has departed – two-time All-America centerfielder Emeel Salem – and one who has yet to play an inning – freshman infielder Ross Wilson, younger brother of Bama quarterback John Parker Wilson.

Alabama returns most position players from last year. Wilson and Josh Rutledge will battle for the shortstop position. Junior college transfer Alex Kubal was brought in to play center.

Matt Bently is back at first base, Jake Smith at third base, and Brandon May at second base.

Jeff Texada is an experienced middle infielder.

Alex Avila has made the transition from infielder to catcher, where he leads six candidates for that job. Avila is Bama's top returning hitter. Mike Sharp, a junior college transfer, and Vin DiFazio, who was out last season with a viral infection, are other top catching candidates.

The outfield includes a number of experienced players, including Kent Matthes, Tyler Odle, Ryan Rhoden, and Del Howell.

In baseball the name of the game is usually pitching. Bama has 17 pitchers on its roster, and Wells is pleased that they "throw strikes." But the Tide does not have a clear No. 1 pitcher. Will Stroup, Miers Quicley and Casey Kebodeaux have started SEC games and Josh Copeland, Austin Hyatt and Austin Graham also have starting experience. In fall work the outstanding pitchers were freshmen Jimmy Nelson and Nathan Kilcrease and Del Howell, who is also an outfielder. Wells expects Howell to come out of the bullpen and for Nelson, Hyatt, Quigley, and Stroup to be starters, Copeland and Kilcrease will be closers.

Arkansas

By Clay Henry

Hawgs Illustrated

If Arkansas can find some pitching, the defending SEC West champ might be just as strong in coach Dave Van Horn's sixth season.

The Hogs relied on their pitching last year in the form of stellar starters Nick Schmidt, Jess Todd and Duke Welker. All went high in the major league draft after spectacular junior seasons.

The losses in the middle of the batting order were heavy, too. The Hogs lost SEC home run leader Danny Hamblin along with catcher Brian Walker and outfielder Jake Dugger.

However, the returnees are solid and the incoming recruiting class is one of Van Horn's best. It appears that the Hogs are reloading, not rebuilding. Coaches thought the Hogs had flatter swings and fewer strikeouts after assessing fall camp.

Third baseman Logan Forsythe, who had a standout summer with the USA National squad, returns to lead the Hogs both on and off the field.

"Logan is one of the most improved players I have ever coached from when he arrived as a freshman to the start of his junior year," Van Horn said. "He has always had the heart and determination. As a sophomore he put it all together and became probably our toughest out at the plate because he really knew the strike zone and made pitchers pitch to him."

"Defensively, he is also one of the top third basemen I have ever coached. The thing about Logan is that he can play anywhere. He could be one of our best shortstops, if not the best second baseman, an outfielder or he could catch. He is just so valuable to our team, and then you throw in the fact that he is a leader."

Forsythe was solid in almost every offensive category with a .347 batting average, nine homers, 18 stolen bases and 55 RBI. Left fielder Casey Coon, the cleanup man most of the year, is also back after leading the team with 71 RBI. The Hogs return the bulk of their infield with shortstop Tim Smalling and second baseman Ben Tschevikow.

The Hogs are excited about freshman first baseman Andy Wilkins, a 6-2, 230-pound lefty with plenty of pop and lots of line drives. Brett Eibner is another standout freshman and is a two-way player. He's got a 94-mph fast ball and is a power-hitting outfielder, too.

The Hogs must replace their entire starting rotation, but the coaching staff thinks there are plenty of solid arms on the staff. Shaun Seibert, out with Tommy John surgery last year, looks good in rehab. Dallas Keuchel, Stephen Richards, Scott Limlocker, Evan Cox and Travis Hill are other returnees ready to step up. Among the newcomers, Mike Bolsinger, Cliff Springston and Eibner should provide plenty of innings.

"When you recruit a young guy on the mound you have to project a little bit," Van Horn said of the pitching. "To have a freshman, like Nick Schmidt, come in and dominate as a true

Arkansas third baseman Lynn Forsythe played for US National Team



Mark F. Henning/Hawgs Illustrated

freshman is rare. We have some guys that have been in our program for a year, been through the SEC and worked with Coach (Dave) Jorn, and we feel like those guys are going to be the mainstay of our pitching staff.

"We had some guys pitch really well in summer ball and again in the fall. We aren't there yet, but we feel like we have quality arms and maybe more depth on the mound."

Auburn

By Jason Caldwell

Inside The Auburn Tigers

Coming off a disappointing 31-25 season, including a finish 10-20 in SEC play, Auburn and coach Tommy Slater are looking to get the program back among the elite in 2008. Thanks to the return of several key performers in the field and on the mound, and the addition of a talented group of newcomers, Auburn could be a team to watch this year in the Southeastern Conference.

Led by a strong pitching staff that finished with a 4.59 ERA last season, the Tigers should have plenty of depth on the mound led by junior starter Paul Burnside. Before an injury put a premature end to his year, Burnside was 7-1 with a 3.06 ERA in 2007 in just 11 appearances and 67 total innings. Experienced returnees Bryan Woodall (2-3, 4.84 ERA), Evan Crawford (5-6, 5.91), Luke Greinke (0-0, 2.61), Taylor Thompson (5-2, 5.91), and Austin Hubbard (1-0, 5.06) are back after combining for 242 2/3 innings.

At the plate the Tigers will be depending on powerful junior Mike Bianucci to carry the load with Josh Donaldson moving on to the Chicago Cubs' organization. As a sophomore Bianucci battled through injuries and still hit .326 with a team-high 14 home runs and 51 RBI.

Perhaps the key to Auburn's offense will be Greinke. A two-way player, Greinke was named the *Baseball America* Summer Player-of-the-Year and hit .314 last season with 36 RBI.

Freshman standout Joseph Sanders has made the switch to second base for next season after hitting .333 with three home runs and 33 RBI last year.

With several key players gone from last season the Tigers will be counting on some new faces to give them help in 2008.

At shortstop Arizona State transfer Matt Hall should be a big improvement for Auburn with redshirt freshman David Cunningham available to play both shortstop and third base. True freshmen Hunter Morris and Kevin Patterson should also provide depth on the infield and at the plate. In the outfield fellow freshmen Trent Mumme and Brian Fletcher both had strong fall practice sessions and should play a big part in Auburn's fortunes this season.

LSU

By Matt Deville

Tiger Rag

There was plenty of excitement heading into last season with new coach Paul

Mainieri at the helm

of the LSU Tigers. In his first year at the controls of the SEC's most storied program, Mainieri, who took over for Smoke Laval, warned that things might get worse before they get better in Baton Rouge.

He was right.

The Tigers, who were used to winning championships on the diamond, failed to make the postseason for the second straight season, finishing 29-26-1 overall. LSU posted a 12-17-1 record in the SEC and went 20-13-1 with what is generally regarded as the best home field advantage in college baseball – Alex Box Stadium.

But things are looking up for Mainieri and the Tigers in 2008. In the offseason, the second-year coach reeled in the nation's No. 2-rated recruiting class, and this year's squad returns the top three hitters and top pitching duo from last year and features two of the most promising young stars in the SEC.

The Tigers' 19-man class includes nine players who were selected in the Major League Baseball draft. The talented group also features eight high school All-Americans and three first-team junior college All-Americans.

Five of the recruits were among *Baseball America*'s Top 200 Prospects, including outfielder Chad Jones of Southern Lab High School in Baton Rouge; righthanded pitcher Taylor Martin of St. Michael High School in Baton Rouge; righthanded pitcher Anthony Ranaudo of St. Rose High School in Jackson, N.J.; infielder DJ LeMahieu of Brother Rice High School in Bloomfield Hills, Mich.; and infielder Matt Clark of Riverside (Calif.) Community College.

Of the top returning players, the Tigers will be led at the plate by sophomore outfielder Blake Dean. Dean batted .316 a year ago with seven home runs and 46 RBI. He is followed by senior middle infielder Michael Hollander (.279, 5 HR, 26 RBI) and sophomore catcher Sean Ochinko (.277, 7 HR, 32 RBI), who was named a Cape Cod All-Star over the summer.

On the mound, senior Jared Bradford is back after turning in a 10-4 record last season with a 4.41 earned run average, while striking out 81. Ryan Byrd is the Tigers' second-leading pitcher from last season, a year in which he went 6-2 with a 4.74 ERA and 35 strikeouts.



Florida's Cole Figueira is son of former major leaguer

Ron Irby

Mainieri is quite excited about a pair of young stars, including sophomore outfielder Jared Mitchell. Mitchell, who plays wide receiver on the Tigers SEC champion football team, batted .258 last season with three home runs and 21 RBI. He was also 18-of-20 on stolen base attempts.

Chad Jones is the other bright young star on this LSU squad. Jones, who was a 13th round pick by the Houston Astros, also plays for the LSU football team where he stars at nickel back and on special teams.

"This was the best fall practice I've ever been involved with," said Mainieri, who is entering his 26th season as a collegiate coach. "The potential is there for us to have a super year, but we still have a lot of work to do. We have to continue to focus on getting better every day, and that means working hard in the weight room and in our conditioning drills."

"We have a long way to go before February 22, but I am very encouraged by our team's talent, chemistry and work ethic."

Mississippi

By Jeff Roberson

The Ole Miss Spirit

Ole Miss baseball has been on the verge of Omaha for three years. No team in the Southeastern Conference has been more productive and won more games than Ole Miss – until the Super Regionals, that is. Over the past five seasons, Ole Miss is the SEC's winningest baseball program.

But come Super Regional time, the road to the College World Series becomes paved with potholes for Ole Miss.

The Rebels will once again be a force in the SEC in 2008. With pitching depth and a fall ball session that produced more home runs than in any of Mike Bianco's previous seven autumns, the Rebels will be loaded with hitters, pitchers, and should continue a Bianco trademark of terrific defense.

On the mound, veteran junior righthanders Lance Lynn and Cody Satterwhite return. Lynn (8-5, 2.85 in 2007) didn't pitch all fall as he recovered from a groin injury he suffered during the summer pitching for Team USA. Satterwhite (4-4, 3.31) pitched in the fall but the coaches didn't bring him along until late. He, too, was rested after a long year of work on the mound.

Other starters should come from a host of talented pitchers, including sophomore lefty Nathan Baker (6-2, 3.92), junior lefty Brett Bukvich (7-3, 4.10), and freshman lefthander Drew Pomeranz. Junior righthanders Scott Bittle (2-5, 2.79) and Rory McKean (0-0, 3.00), and sophomore righthander Phillip Irwin (2-0, 3.07) will also be among the

starting possibilities. Sophomore righthander Justin Cryer concluded the fall as the most likely candidate for the closer role.

Junior Brett Basham returns behind the plate, but he's in a battle for the top catching spot with junior newcomer Kyle Henson. Both had productive falls and the battle should continue through preseason practice.

The four infield position spots appear to be up in the air among several talented players. First base could find any number of players, including sophomore Cullen Kight, who came on strong at the plate late last season, sophomore Matt Smith, and freshman Cliff Vaughn. Junior Cody Overbeck, who played third last year, could also wind up at first.

At third, Overbeck is still penciled in, but junior Evan Button is also heavily in the mix.

The versatile Button could be the shortstop or second baseman, but several others are also vying for the middle infield positions. Junior transfer Sean Stuyverson may be the frontrunner at short, with sophomore Zach Miller and freshman Tim Ferguson also contenders.

In the outfield, two veterans return along with a handful of newcomers. Two spots will likely go to returning players junior Logan Power and sophomore Jordan Henry. Juco juniors Michael Guerrero or Michael Hubbard, with Matt Smith and junior Jeremy Travis a possibility, will likely man the other outfield spot.

The Rebs are loaded with hitters, and several could DH, including Matt Smith, Kight, and seniors Fuller Smith and Kyle Mills.

"It may be the most competitive we've been at each position," Bianco said. "We've had some good teams and good players, but it looks like we are at least two deep at every position. And we have a lot of depth on the pitching staff."

Mississippi State

By Gene Swindoll

Dawgs Bite

Mississippi State returns most of its pitching staff and five starting position players from a team that appeared in the 2007 College World Series after sweeping Clemson in a two-game Super Regional. That's the good news.

The bad news is State also lost five starting position players, including the top catcher in the nation in Edward Easley, from last year's team. Those five accounted for 29 of MSU's 51 home runs and 233 of the team's 419 runs scored.

State is expected to replace Easley with a left-right hitting combination of sophomore Ryan Duffy and Johnny Allen, a 6-3, 228-pound walk-on from Pearl River Community College. Allen was the surprise of the fall, hitting for both average and power.

The infield will be led by sophomore Brandon Turner, a .399 hitter last season.

Also returning are starters Connor Powers (.306), Jet Butler (.245) and Russ Sneed (.316), all of whom are sophomores. While it's expected that Powers will be the opening-day third baseman, look for Sneed and Butler to battle for the shortstop position. First base will probably be manned by junior college transfer Tyler Moore.

In the outfield, starting centerfielder Mark Goforth, a junior, returns after hitting .282. Junior power-hitting Jeff Flagg (.312) is a candidate to play right field along with senior Andy Rice (.209) while redshirt freshman Jason Nappi and junior Nick Hardy will battle it out for left field.

Pitching-wise, State returns two SEC starters, junior Chad Crosswhite and senior Justin Pigott, as well as both mid-week

starters and all of its bullpen except for Mitch Moreland, who was drafted and signed, and little-used Mike Valentine.

Sophomore Ricky Bowen is expected to take over for departed SEC starter Josh Johnson.

Mid-week starters should be sophomore Tyler Whitney and senior Jesse Carver.

Hard-throwing sophomore Aaron Weatherford, who consistently threw in the 94 to 96 MPH range during the fall, will be State's closer while senior John Lalor, sophomore Greg Houston and Jesse Carver will also work out of the bullpen.

If State's hitting comes through, don't be surprised to see Mississippi State in the 2008 College World Series.

SEC East Division

Florida

By Matthew Postins

Fightin' Gators Magazine

Kevin O'Sullivan begins his first year as a head coach after working as pitching coach (eventually associate head coach) and recruiting coordinator for Clemson University since 1999.

As a longtime pitching coach, O'Sullivan's first task was organizing his pitching staff for the coming season, beginning with returning senior Josh Edmondson.

Edmondson appeared in 31 games last year, collecting a 3.91 earned run average and a 2-1 record in 52 innings. O'Sullivan believes he can use the senior as a closer or a set-up man.

Patrick Keating, a junior righthander who notched two saves last year, will have a key bullpen role. He had a high ERA last year (5.79), but he threw 42 innings and fanned twice as many as he walked (27-to-13).

Sophomore Billy Bullock gives the Gators their most experienced returning starter. The towering righthander (he's 6-6) threw 61 innings last year, started 15 games and posted a 2-7 record. Freshmen Tommy Toledo and Travis Lawler are expected to step into key roles immediately. Toledo, from Tampa, Fla., turned down a third-round pro contract from the San Diego Padres to play for the Gators. Lawler, who played for A&M Consolidated High School in College Station, Texas, was a 34th round selection by the Colorado Rockies.

The infield and outfield boast more experience than their classifications suggest. Among the top seven returning position players, four started at least 35 games a year ago.

Nobody has bigger shoes to fill than first baseman Brandon McArthur. McArthur missed the season after tearing his ulnar collateral ligament in the season opener against VMI. All he has to do is replace Gator home run king and first-round pick Matt LaPorta.

In 2006, McArthur hit .268 with two home runs and 30 RBI. He didn't play any games at first base but was a solid third baseman.

Cole Figueroa (.332 average with 50 RBI), a sophomore shortstop whose father played with the St. Louis Cardinals, anchors the middle, while redshirt sophomore Clayton Pisani (.254 average) and freshman John Adams could share time at second base.

Jon Townsend (.280, six home runs, 34 RBI) will be the starting third baseman.

In the outfield O'Sullivan has quickly become comfortable with Avery Barnes in left field, even though the junior only made one start at that position last year. He primarily played second base. He hit .293 with three home runs and 27 RBI. Sophomores Matt den Dekker (.234, 7 HR, 25 RBI) and Jonathan Pigott (.260, 14 RBI) will likely man the other outfield spots.



Kentucky's Collin Cowgill redshirted last season.

University of Kentucky Athletics

Georgia

By Dean Legge

Dawg Post

Coming into the 2007 season Georgia's baseball program knew it still had some growing up to do. It did just that during a season where it was forced to replace much of the fire power from the program's run to the 2006 College World Series.

As one of the youngest teams in the SEC, Georgia ended its year with the second most pitching appearances by freshmen (86) and third most at bats (703) by freshmen hitters. The Dawgs finished 2007 by hitting only .279 as a team and had a 4.66 ERA. In the SEC, Georgia's starting pitchers went 9-10 with a 5.82 ERA while the bullpen went 2-9 with a 4.93 ERA. Also, Georgia averaged 5.2 runs a game and only 4.3 runs in SEC games. The youth factor was too much to overcome, and as expected, Georgia missed out on the post-season, going 23-23 with an SEC-worst 11-19 record in conference play.

But with a season under its belt, the youth corps at Georgia is expected to blossom into a force to be reckoned with during SEC play. Pitching will be the key for the Dawgs in 2008. Georgia has arguably the top rotation of pitchers in the SEC: Stephen Dodson, Trevor Holder and Nathon Moreau all return as does All-America closer Josh Fields. Moreau may be the Dawgs' ace this season after ending 2007 with wins over No. 1 Vanderbilt, No. 7 South Carolina and No. 13 Mississippi State. A second-round selection in last season's Major League Baseball Draft, Fields turned down a



James Darnell is third baseman in spectacular South Carolina infield

chance to sign with the Atlanta Braves in favor of finishing out his senior season.

Offensively, sophomore shortstop Gordon Beckham led the team in home runs (13) and RBI (51) while batting .307 in 2007. He has 25 home runs in his career. Junior third baseman Ryan Peisel (.295-4-29) had a career-best 18-game hitting streak during the year, which ranked as the third longest in school history. Beckham and Peisel will be back to anchor the infield while junior Matt Olson (.317-5-43) will direct the outfield.

Georgia's schedule has the built-in burden of playing in the SEC. The Bulldogs host South Carolina, Tennessee, Ole Miss, Alabama and Kentucky, but travel to Arkansas, Mississippi State, LSU, Florida and Vanderbilt. Georgia's out-of-conference schedule is ambitious. The Dawgs also play the ACC's Florida State, Clemson and Georgia Tech and line up against the Pac-10's Arizona and Oregon State, too.

If the Dawgs can get timely hitting to go along with impressive pitching, a key to the Dawgs' run of three College World Series appearances since 2001, they could be back home in Omaha again next June.

Kentucky

By Stephen M. John

Kentucky Sports Report

The Kentucky baseball team is coming off the most successful two-year run in its 103-year history and coach John Cohen likes the depth he sees in his upcoming team.

"I think we have more depth now than we've had in the past," Cohen said. "We've gotten some much-needed help, especially in the infield."

The Wildcats return nearly all of their roster from the 34-win season in 2007, including their three best players, sluggers Sawyer Carroll, Collin Cowgill, and Scott Green. The trio all backed away from the major league draft, and potentially fat contracts, to return to the team for 2008. Green, a 6-8 right-handed pitcher who packs a 95-mph fastball, was recently named as 12th best prospect in college baseball by Baseball America. Carroll hit .350 with a Southeastern Conference leading 23 doubles in 54 games in 2007. Cowgill, an outfielder who redshirted last season, finished the 2006 season ranked second on the team in RBI (62) and runs scored (61) and batted an astounding .380 with two outs, making him the

team's best clutch performer.

"It's big from the leadership standpoint," Cohen said. "When you're dealing with young men, turning down a significant amount of money to be a part of something special really gives credibility to our (lineup) card and our program. Those guys have been great."

During fall workouts, Cohen said his team worked on its defense, especially around the bases. "That was our Achilles heel last season," Cohen said. "We just didn't defend in the infield like we wanted to."

"We're in good position, but we need to stay healthy," Cohen concluded. "I think this is the most talented team we've had since I've been at the University of Kentucky."

And the future bodes well beyond 2008. The Bat Cats recently signed one of the top recruiting classes in the nation, including five of the top 50 rated prospects.

"We are losing a significant amount of at-bats and innings after the upcoming season," Cohen said, "and it was important to sign a group that could step in immediately and have success in the best conference in college baseball, and we did just that."

South Carolina

By Roger A. Olivier

GamecockAnthem.com

For a second consecutive season the South Carolina Gamecocks fell one game short of Omaha at the hands of 2006 and 2007 runner-up North Carolina. An offensive juggernaut, South Carolina muscled its way through most of the season, until a delicate pitching staff and ill-timed defensive lapses became its undoing.

With 2008 on the horizon, Collegiate Baseball ranks the incoming recruiting class as the 18th best in the country. Though the pitching staff suffered key losses, the rehabilitation of Jay Brown and an emergence by Parker Bangs and Will Atwood should mesh nicely with Blake Cooper and Mike Cisco.

The offense lost a ton of talent when second baseman Travis Jones and catcher Trent Kline elected to forego senior seasons in favor of the professional ranks, but the Gamecocks recovered nicely by inserting veterans Andrew Crisp and Kyle Enders in their place. Crisp may provide as much of a shock to Gamecock Nation as Jones did a year ago when he hit .318, with 18 HR, 68 RBI and 13 steals.

The rest of the infield is nothing short of spectacular. Three juniors could easily be playing their final seasons in Columbia as first baseman Justin Smoak, third baseman James Darnell and shortstop Reese Havens all project to have their names called on draft day in May 2008.

The outfield will be an infusion of young talent mixed with 2007's pleasant surprise, right fielder Harley Lail. True freshman speedster Whit Merrifield should man centerfield. His explosive speed proved invaluable this fall. The left field job could come down to a traditional battle between boxer versus puncher. Lexington High School hitting machine Justin Hopper and Jose Rodriguez continue to battle. Don't be surprised to see All-SEC DH Phil Disher flash some occasional leftfield leather as well.

The new SEC scheduling format forces teams into five-man rotations for 2008. The Gamecocks are deep with potential starters while the bullpen looks formidable. With Cisco, Cooper, Brown, Bangs, and Atwood, the Gamecock staff is extremely talented, but even more brittle.

Possible closer Curtis Johnson plus Alex Farrotto, Jordan Costner, and Nick Godwin could turn into a solid bullpen.

Third baseman Pedro Alvarez
one of Vandy's top hitters



Stan Jones

Tennessee

By Jimmy Hyams
Rocky Top News

After 18 seasons and three College World Series appearances, Tennessee fired baseball coach Rod Delmonico, concerned about the program's lack of consistency.

Todd Raleigh was hired from Western Carolina, charged with making the Vols a regular in the NCAA Tournament.

Raleigh will have a different approach. While Delmonico preferred small ball – the Vols hit just 49 home runs last season – Raleigh likes bashers.

"Tennessee's baseball teams will be prepared mentally and physically to play every day," said Raleigh, who has eight returners who made at least 25 starts. "We'll be physical. We'll have big, strong athletic guys that can bang the ball around a little bit."

Tennessee lost three first-round draft picks – pitcher James Adkins, catcher J.P. Arencibia and outfielder Julio Borbon. Also gone are pitcher Craig Cobb and All-SEC infielder Tony

Delmonico, son of the coach who transferred to Florida State.

And 20 of the 34 pitching wins have departed. But Raleigh promises to put a competitive team on the field.

The top returning hitter is Andy Simunic, who hit .333 and stole 29 bases. Pitcher-outfielder Jeff Lockwood is a budding star. As a freshman, he hit .315 with 34 runs batted in while going 2-2 with eight saves and a 4.44 ERA.

Five other position starters return, led by third baseman Cody Brown (six homers, 34 RBI despite a bum shoulder), catcher Yan Gomes (.310, eight homers, 47 RBI) and shortstop Danny Lima (.280). Shawn Griffin (.268) and Jarred Frazier (.275) are returning outfielders while true freshman Kentrail Davis could land the centerfield job. Freshman Josh Liles will battle in rightfield.

Raleigh lured Fred Corral back as pitching coach. The bullpen should be solid with Lockwood, Aaron Everett (4-0, 2.82 ERA, 46 strikeouts in 44.2 innings) and Danny Wiltz, although Lockwood could become a starter. Nick Hernandez (4-4) had trouble with his control and posted a 6.23 ERA. Bryan Morgado missed last season with an injury but could make the rotation. Three transfers -- Steve Crnkovich, Joey Rosas and D.J. Leffler – add depth.

If the Vols stay healthy and the new rotation comes though, UT could be a surprise team in the SEC East.

Vanderbilt

By Don Yates
VandyMania.com

The 2008 Vanderbilt baseball team hopes to build on the successes of last season. The 2007 Commodores won the most games (54) in Vanderbilt history and were ranked No. 1 throughout much of the season, but were stunned in the first round of the NCAA Tournament after a pair of 4-3 losses to Michigan. However, Vanderbilt did win both the Southeastern Conference regular season and tournament titles.

Pitching is an area of traditional strength for Vanderbilt. The Commodores will be hard pressed to replace left handed starting pitcher David Price and closer Casey Weathers. Both were selected in the first round of the Major League Baseball Draft with Price being the overall top pick. Sophomore lefty Mike Minor (3.09 ERA) will likely be the Friday starter for the Commodores in '08. Minor finished the 2007 season with a sparkling 9-1 record in his first season in Nashville. Right handers Brett Jacobson (3.15 ERA, 6-3) and Nick Christiani (4.11 ERA, 5-3) should have the inside track to be the other weekend starters but could be pushed by several incoming heralded freshmen.

While questions loom for the Commodore pitching unit, Vanderbilt's hitting should be solid again in '08. The Commodores return several outstanding offensive weapons including third baseman Pedro Alvarez (.386, 18 HR), shortstop Ryan Flaherty (.386, 4 HR), rightfielder Dominic de la Osa (.378, 20 HR), centerfielder David Macias (.300), second baseman Alex Feinberg (.317, 4 HR), and catcher Shea Robin (.286, 2 HR). Flaherty had a 35-game hitting streak during the 2007 season. Alvarez and de la Osa were both selected first team All-SEC.

Vanderbilt opens the 2008 season facing both Oregon State and Arizona State in Arizona. Illinois-Chicago, Kansas, Iowa, Xavier and Western Carolina then visit Nashville. The Commodores will later endure the usual SEC schedule gauntlet with trips to Alabama, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, Tennessee and Florida. Vandy gets visits from fellow conference members South Carolina, Arkansas, Auburn and Kentucky.

SQUEEZE PLAY

Upcoming NCAA rule changes on roster limits, transfer rules and scholarship distribution could present a new set of problems for many college baseball programs

BY MATTHEW POSTINS **SCOUT.COM**



Few college baseball coaches understand the value of a scholarship like the University of Arizona's Andy Lopez.

Growing up in Southern California in the early 1970s, Lopez spent his first two years of college at Los Angeles Harbor Community College. When it came to playing for a Division I school, Lopez knew the only way it would happen is if a school could offer him a full scholarship.

"I couldn't have gone to school without it," Lopez said. "Not even with a partial."

Lopez did what the NCAA hopes every student-athlete does with an athletic scholarship — better themselves. Lopez actually turned down a pro contract after his eligibility ended at UCLA and began a coaching career that led him to the Wildcats. Along the way, according to the University of Arizona athletics Web site, Lopez has helped 87 baseball players achieve their dream of playing pro baseball.

Lopez gets what college athletics is all about. But the days of full scholarships are long over.

And the task of recruiting college baseball players is getting harder.

"I remember when (the NCAA) dropped the number of scholarships from 15 to 13 and we all panicked," Lopez said. "I won't speak for anyone else. But on my behalf, I hold my breath every time they meet because I'm worried they'll go less than 11.7 (scholarships)."

He isn't the only one.

College baseball, as a sport, has never been healthier. Its flagship event, the College World Series in Omaha, Neb., receives first-pitch to final-out coverage on ESPN and draws healthy ratings. All baseball coaches point to the fact that the sport is the NCAA's second-highest revenue producer after the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament (and are quick to point out that football's bowl revenues go to the respective conferences, not to the NCAA).

But the Division I baseball coaches believe they are operating in an ever-tightening scholarship situation. Not only are they able to offer only 11.7 scholarships, but recent rules changes by the NCAA on roster limits, transfer rules and scholarship distribution will make putting together a roster capable of contending for a College World Series berth that much tougher and may eventually penalize programs that don't necessarily deserve it.

"The joke is we played super regionals at Clemson and it was a packed house," Mississippi State head coach Ron Polk said. "Wouldn't it have been great if the NCAA could have been there to see that crowd and the excitement or watch it on TV? The people who make the rules watch the History Channel."

The NCAA adopted rules changes for the 2008-09 season because it believes the sport as a whole is underperforming in its APR (Academic Performance Rate), which measures a program's retention and graduation of student athletes. An objective look at those new rules would indicate that the NCAA is attempting to curtail student-athlete transfers, the well-established practice of "oversigning" in college baseball and improve graduation rates.

Some coaches, like Polk, look at it as punishment.

"We have all these sanctions that no other sport has," Polk said.

And the debate is far from over.

Starting in 2008-09, college baseball will be subject to four new rules. First, an athletic scholarship must be at least 25 percent of the cost of tuition, fees, room and board and books. Plus, rosters will be capped at 35 players, with 30 on scholarship in '08-09 and 27 on scholarship the following year. Second, Division I players must be certified academically at their school at the start of the fall semester to be eligible in the spring. Third, transfers who move to another Division I program must sit out one year before playing for their new school. Finally, programs with a four-year APR under 900 are subject to baseball specific penalties such as scholarship reductions, schedule reductions and practice time reductions.

The Baseball Academic Enhancement Group, a panel of 27 that

included only three baseball coaches, proposed the new rules. The nation's Division I school presidents approved the measure.

The easiest place to start is with what the nation's baseball coaches already have — 11.7 scholarships. Under the current rules, coaches may divide that scholarship money any way they choose. Full scholarships like Lopez's are rare. But that flexibility allows schools to be creative with how they offer scholarships.

The NCAA allows schools and student-athletes to use academic scholarships, if the student qualifies, to make up for what their limited athletic scholarship money doesn't pay.

Some states, like Florida, Georgia and Louisiana have a further advantage with state programs funded by lotteries. Those programs offer in-state students who qualify academically drastically reduced tuition costs if they attend an in-state school.

Lopez has seen both sides. He coached at Florida for several years and took advantage of the "Bright Futures" program. It enabled him to recruit a baseball player who qualified for the program academically and only offer him scholarship money for books — about five percent. He could then take the money he saved and offer it to another recruit.

Arizona does not have a similar program. Neither does Mississippi.

"We have seven schools in the SEC that have lotteries," Polk said. "I feel like we're the Kansas City Royals playing the Yankees."

When the new rules kick in, that option will no longer exist. Coaches will be required to offer every player on scholarship

at least 25 percent of one scholarship, significantly reducing the impact of such lottery-funded education programs.

"That's the toughest part of the package because of the cost differential from school to school," said Minnesota coach John Anderson, who is part of the Division I competition committee. "The rule was put in place because of some states that have lottery scholarships. Some (schools) had forty guys on scholarship. Some have it (the lottery) and some don't. There was a wide disparity. The Ivy League doesn't have any (athletic) scholarships at all."

The new rule limits coaches' flexibility, Lopez said. The job, he said, of walking into a recruit's home and offering him a partial scholarship was already a difficult proposition.

"It's almost comical," Lopez said. "You almost feel like a fool. I got a full scholarship to play at UCLA. That was the only reason I went. When you can't go into a home and offer a full, you don't get those guys. If they're drafted in the 10th round with a \$75,000 bonus? That's a slam dunk. They're not going to school. Then I offer them seventy percent and they still have to come up with \$4,000."

Texas assistant coach Tommy Harmon — who is also the Longhorns' recruiting

--Mississippi State coach Ron Polk



2005 College World Series

Jed Jacobsohn/Getty

coordinator — said he and head coach Augie Garrido are careful when they recruit players they believe could be selected high in the draft.

"If we think someone is going to sign in the sixth or seventh round (out of high school) we don't recruit them," Harmon said. "If someone is not sincerely interested in playing college baseball, you're not going to be able to compete with major league baseball."

The NCAA's approach appears two-pronged — balance the minimum scholarship offered with a reduction in team rosters.

Consider the rosters for the coaches of the schools quoted in this story. Florida and Minnesota each had 34 players on their rosters. Texas had 38. Arizona had 43. Mississippi State's spring roster wasn't up at the time, but the Bulldogs had 44 players on their team last year.

The numbers game is already difficult, but after this season it gets worse. Starting in 2008-09, Division I baseball players who transfer — even walk-ons — must sit out a year before playing for their new team. That's nothing new for "head count" sports like football and basketball. But for partial scholarship sports like baseball it's a major change. Before, student-athletes could transfer once for any reason to any other Division I school without sitting out a year.

This past fall was the cutoff. Polk admits he had to let nine walk-ons go so they could transfer and find another program. That might seem cold, but the coaches agreed they'd rather do it now than later.

"You have to be honest with them," Florida coach Kevin O'Sullivan said. "The dishonest thing would be to keep your trap shut and keep the kid and then let him go (later). Unless he's a freshman and can transfer to junior college, he can't go anywhere without sitting out a year."

Why the new transfer rule? Most coaches believe the NCAA is trying to cut down on a practice called "oversigning," in which schools sign more players than they need each year. Some coaches, like Anderson and Lopez, said the fall practices, for some schools, amount to a tryout period of sorts. Coaches sort through their roster and determine who to keep and who to let go.

Coaches believe that once the new rules are triggered, the numbers game will catch up with programs, even the ones that minimize oversigning.

How? Polk is dealing with it right now.

"We have twenty-seven (scholarship) players coming back and I just signed six (for 2008-09)," Polk said. "I'm at thirty-four (scholarship players right now). I do anticipate losing some in the draft, but what if they come back? I have to dump them. You can never nail the thirty (scholarship players). The teams that don't have kids that are drafted regularly can nail it. But we're talking about those of us that sign draftable guys. Who's going to come out hurting in the long run? The kids. You can be cruel to your program or cruel to your kids. If I'm a nice guy and I'm looking at the thirty (scholarship) cap, I can't sign too many more than that."

Oversigning, coaches agreed, happens everywhere. Coaches need to do it in order to plan for the possible signing

of their players to pro contracts. But there's a difference between oversigning and trying out players and then discarding them.

"The responsible teams did it in the low 30s for the sake of their roster," O'Sullivan said.

"Most coaches say 'I'm just going to keep on signing and deal with it when I have to,'" Polk said. "The kids will suffer."

And that, coaches agreed, is one of the things hurting their APR.

The NCAA, according to published reports, is seeking to bring all sports up to a 950 APR, which it equates to a 50 percent graduation rate. According to an April 2007 NCAA survey, almost 69 percent of the nation's 6,110 athletic teams surveyed met or exceeded the requirement in a three-year period. Of the remaining 1,885 teams, approximately 1,130 did not meet the 925 or 900 cutoffs.

Without squad-size adjustments, the number of baseball programs that fell short of the 925 cutoff in the survey was 46 (15.8 percent). That percentage was second only to football (47.20 percent).

Meanwhile, baseball's graduation success rate has risen from 65.3 percent in 1995 to 67.3 percent in 2000. Football's graduation success rate has risen at the same rate.

Baseball coaches agree that when compared to basketball and football they're holding steady. But the NCAA is not comparing them to those two sports. They're comparing baseball to the other partial scholarship sports. When compared to those sports, baseball's 46 programs that fell short of the 925 cutoff number is far and away the highest. Track and field is next at 12 (4.6 percent), followed by wrestling with eight (9.8 percent).

The coaches say it's unfair to compare them to other partial-scholarship sports for a variety of reasons.

"Our kids tend to play in the summer because they have those chances," Anderson said. "It's a chance to follow that dream (of pro baseball). Our kids have that chance. With the schedule we play and the travel, we have more missed class days (than most sports). Our schedule is hectic."

Summer baseball — and by extension an inability to go to summer school as most college football and basketball players do — isn't the biggest factor, though. Baseball is the only sport in which kids must deal with the pro draft going into and coming out of college, O'Sullivan said. If a player foregoes the pro ranks

coming out of high school, he isn't eligible for the draft again until after his junior season.

Baseball's amateur draft is 50 rounds. With 30 major league teams, 1,500 players are selected every year. And that doesn't include the sandwich and compensation picks pro teams are awarded.

The NFL Draft, where juniors are also eligible, features approximately 250 selections. The NBA Draft, where players are eligible after their freshman year, features approximately 60 selections.

Baseball players have been leaving early for years, but only now has it caught up with college programs. Baseball's graduation rate, according to an NCAA Division I survey, was 45 percent among its 2000-01 class. It's graduation success rate, which includes transfers and eliminates athletes who leave school in good academic standing before using all their eligibility is 66 percent, slightly better than Division I football (65 percent) and Division I basketball (61 percent).

Two things trigger a "point" against a program's APR — the transfer of a player and a player that doesn't graduate within six years.

That six-year window bothers coaches. Their kids are graduating at a higher rate than football and basketball, they say. But those that leave early for pro baseball can't always finish their degree in six years.

"We have ten guys back in school this (fall) semester and they play pro baseball and they'll get their degree, but it may come in their seventh or eighth year," Harmon said. "At our school they're graduating, but not in six years."

The NCAA began using the APR just a few years ago, and many coaches believed that if given time to work, the situation would have corrected itself. The belief was that coaches who oversigned would eventually drop under the 900 APR threshold and either change their recruiting strategy or suffer penalties.

But then the NCAA acted earlier this year.

"I think this will be a sea change in the academic culture of baseball," Walter Harrison, chair of the NCAA Executive Committee and president of the University of Hartford, told USA Today.

Scout.com called Harrison at his office at the University of Hartford for further comment for this story, but a phone message was not returned.

The new rules left coaches like Polk and Clemson coach Jack Leggett steamed. Leggett held an hour-long conversation with local media in South Carolina to talk about it. Polk's Bulldogs reached the College World Series last June, and after listening to a press conference called "The State of College Baseball," he lashed out at the NCAA for what he believed was their characterization that college baseball's student-athletes were underachieving in the classroom.

Polk became so angry that he later rifled off an 18-page letter to, among others, every Division I school president, the ones that approved the final academic proposal.

The 64-year old coach then declared the NCAA the "enemy of college baseball" during a high school baseball information seminar in Decatur, Ala.

He's become the de facto spokesperson for the rest of the nation's baseball coaches.

"All the coaches were calling, telling me, 'We have to do something,' but we don't have that one leader," Polk said. "If this had happened in football, war would have been declared. I'm not doing it for my future. Someone had to write this (letter) to let them know this is flawed. I think everyone understood but the people that made the decision."

Some coaches, like Minnesota's Anderson, are already trying to find a solution to the new rules. But he also said the nation's coaches have to accept part of the blame for the situation, specifically in the case of oversigning.

"It's been abused and misused, no question," Anderson said. "I think we're being penalized a bit because we've abused it, no

question. Do I like to tell kids that you have to pay that penalty (transferring) in a sport that doesn't have a lot of aid? No. It's time for us to stop and take a look at it."

He also agreed with Polk that the sport does not have that key spokesperson, that one leader who could stand up for the sport and foster change.

"As coaches we need to sit down and come up with some modifications or changes we can endorse unanimously and take it to them," Anderson said. "We need to say we're all behind it. We've gotten bits and pieces from people about it. Some thought nothing was going to happen and it did."

Anderson said the same thing happened when the NCAA moved baseball's scheduled start date two weeks later in February for this season. Anderson said baseball's coaches didn't join together then to fight that, either.

Other coaches, like Harmon, have accepted the new standards and moved on.

"Everyone has the same requirements, so it's the same for everyone else," Harmon said. "You can beat yourself up and argue with it and spend more time complaining about it instead of getting on board and making it productive. That's what we've chosen to do. At our university you can see the results of the efforts. Our team's GPA was 3.0 last year. There's a bigger emphasis put on academics. That committee was looking for that."

All of the coaches interviewed for this story were unanimous in saying that graduating players is their highest priority. They have no problem with improving graduation rates or grade point averages.

But the new rules, they believe, severely hamper their ability to recruit the type of student-athletes who would not only elevate their program athletically but also their APR.

"Our kids are not bad students," Polk said. "They're not graduating as quickly and the only reasons are a fifty-round MLB draft and they weren't going to summer school."

"Kids and parents value their education, I think," O'Sullivan said. "That's the key. The key is to find good players that are good academic kids and do the right thing socially. That's the breaking point for everyone."

Anderson believes the new rules may only be in place in their current form for a couple of years. And there is no shortage of ideas out there from coaches on how to tweak the rules to potentially get better results.

Leggett suggested a limit of 15 recruits per season and keeping the same 11.7 players on scholarship in the fall and spring semesters, limiting what he called "tryouts" that he says some schools run, in effect chasing players off between fall and spring semesters.

Anderson would like to see some slack provided on transfers, specifically to walk-ons or players receiving less than five percent of a scholarship.

Everyone is unanimous in one respect. They feel the sport needs more scholarships.

"It makes more sense to give 25 or 27 scholarships to baseball and that would make it a head count sport," Harmon said. "I don't know if that would fly."

Whether it would or not, Anderson views this crisis, as many coaches have called it, as a wake-up call for the sport. The next step for the coaches is critical if they expect to get some of their freedom back.

Because it won't be the coaches that pay.

"There's more pressure now in trying to remain competitive," Anderson said. "You find ways to stay up at the top and the student-athlete gets stuck in the middle. It's a difficult scenario. Football and basketball would not allow the discrepancies to exist as they do in our sport. I thought we were out of control five years ago. The APR has woken people up to what is going on but now we need a better system."



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GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



DODGE

Roses Among Thorns

Notes from 2007 Alabama football season

No one would suggest that 2007 was a good football season by Alabama standards. Four consecutive losses followed the high point of the season when the Crimson Tide blasted Tennessee. That comforting win was overcome by a heart-breaking loss to LSU, a disastrous throwaway of a game at Mississippi State, and an incomprehensible defeat at the hands of Louisiana-Monroe. And, oh yes, a sixth straight loss to Auburn.

But among the horrible were good things for the Crimson Tide, including being selected for post-season play. Bama's invitation

to represent the Southeastern Conference in the PetroSun Independence Bowl in Shreveport was a testament to Alabama football tradition more than to the achievements of the 2007 squad, but it adds to Crimson Tide historical luster.

Even though Alabama may have under-performed, there were noteworthy performances. Perhaps the best was that of offensive tackle Andre Smith. Each year the coaches of the SEC select the league's best blocker to receive the Jacobs Award. In 2007, as a sophomore, Smith was selected to share that award with Arkansas center Jonathan Luigs.

Smith was the only UA offensive lineman to start every game at the same position this season. He was also selected first team All-SEC. He has started at left tackle in every game in his two-year Alabama career. As a freshman he scored a touchdown on a two-yard lateral play against Oklahoma State in the Independence Bowl. On Tuesday, he was named First-Team All-SEC by the league's head coaches. Smith has started at left tackle in all 25 games in his UA career and scored on a two-yard lateral in last year's Independence Bowl game against Oklahoma State.

Smith became the 19th player in Alabama history to win the Jacobs Trophy and the first since Wesley Britt was honored in 2004. Other Crimson Tide winners include Riley Smith (1935), Leroy Monsky (1937), Hal Self (1946), Butch Avinger (1949 & 1950), Billy Neighbors (1961), Butch Wilson (1962), Cecil Dowdy (1966), John Hannah (1972), Buddy Brown (1973),



Stuart McNair

Sylvester Croom (1974), Bob Cryder (1977), Dwight Stephenson (1979), Wes Neighbors (1986), Howard Cross (1988), Tobie Shiels (1993), Chris Samuels (1999) and Britt (2004).

Croom received another award this year. The former Tide star and assistant coach who is now head coach at Mississippi State was selected the SEC Coach of the Year.

Alabama was well represented on the All-SEC Coaches' Football Team with four first team selections and two second team selections.

In addition to Smith on offense, the first team All-SEC squad had senior

defensive end Wallace Gilberry, senior cornerback Simeon Castile and junior safety Rashad Johnson voted to the first team. Senior wide receiver D.J. Hall and junior offensive lineman Antoine Caldwell earned second team honors.

SEC Champion LSU had a league-high 10 representatives on the team, while also leading with seven members on the first team. Eleven of the 12 SEC schools had a member on the first-team All-SEC squad. Alabama and Arkansas had four players on the first team with South Carolina and Tennessee with three each, while Florida, Kentucky, Ole Miss and Vanderbilt had two. Every SEC squad had at least two players represented on the first and second teams.

The league coaches also selected an All-Freshman team that included Bama middle linebacker Rolando McClain as one of three unanimous choices. Also making the freshman team from Alabama were running back Terry Grant and cornerback Kareem Jackson

Jackson and McClain were also named second team Freshman All-Americas by Scout Media while Grant earned Freshman All-America honorable mention.

The three were also selected to the Sporting News SEC All-Freshman team.

Alabama players selected team captains at the conclusion of regular season play. The captains included two juniors and two former walk-on players. Named as captains were senior linebacker Darren Mustin, junior

safety Rashad Johnson, and junior offensive lineman Antoine Caldwell. Caldwell's selection came in spite of him having been suspended for four games during the season for his participation in improper receipt of textbooks.

(Also punished for that violation were offensive lineman Marlon Davis, tailback Glen Coffee, and defensive backs Chris Rogers and Marquis Johnson.)

Team awards are:

Unsung Hero Fortress Rayford and Mike Johnson

Senior Scholar Matt Collins

Academic Excellence Javier

Arenas, Terry Grant, Rolando McClain and Evan Cardwell

Iron Man Marcus Carter and Greg McElroy

Most Inspirational Darren Mustin

Pat Trammell Award Keith Saunders and Matt Caddell

Outstanding Defensive Performer Wallace Gilberry and Darren Mustin

Up-Front Award Wallace Gilberry and Andre Smith

Defensive Achievement Ezekial Knight and Karrem Jackson

Offensive Achievement Terry Grant and John Parker Wilson

President's Award Simeon Castille, Justin Britt and Travis McCall

Special Teams Player of the Year Javier Arenas and Jimmy Johns

Offensive Player of the Year Andre Smith and D.J. Hall

Defensive Player of the Year Rashad Johnson and Wallace Gilberry

Midway through the 2007 season, the Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama took care of some technical work that made the Crimson Tide football coaching staff the highest paid in the SEC, and very likely in the nation.

A survey by the Ledger-Enquirer of Columbus, Georgia, last summer revealed LSU assistants were making \$1.88 million annually. When Alabama's staff salaries were approved, the assistants were making \$2.245 million annually.

Previously it had been announced that Nick Saban was the nation's highest-paid head coach with an eight-year contract for \$32 million.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE

GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who performed in Crimson and White over a 75-year period tell us WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.

The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall

of Fame caliber coach himself.

Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did not become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS is now available. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To order your copy (\$27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE



GENE STALLINGS

AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

KIRK McNAIR

Tide Aiming Higher

Bama has one of nation's top softball programs

Success. Consistency. National recognition.

Those words, mentioned by nearly every collegiate coach no matter the school or the sport, are easy to say, but not so easy to achieve. But Alabama Softball Coach Patrick Murphy has done just that. Indeed, an Alabama fan would be hard-pressed to find a Crimson Tide program that achieved those three milestones more consistently in the past decade. After another successful run in 2007, however, Alabama looks to achieve even greater heights in 2008. Because even with all of the highlights of the past season, one glaring hole exists in the Tide's resume.

At most places, it would be hard to top last season. The Tide racked up yet another 50-win season. Bama hosted an NCAA Regional, where it won four straight games facing elimination to advance to the Super Regionals for the third straight year. Along the way, Alabama earned the program's first Number One ranking and finished as the ninth-ranked team in the nation after setting the Southeastern Conference all-time record for home runs by a team in a season.

Murphy and his team, though, were not among those who made the trip to Oklahoma City to compete in the College World Series. It's something the 10-year head coach definitely wants to resume after having played in the sport's most recognized

Pitching is the name of the game and Chrissy Owens is excellent for Bama



University of Alabama

forum three of the previous four years.

Fortunately for Murphy, this year's team returns nearly every key member from last year's unit.

"We are so blessed to have so many great kids coming back from last year's team," Murphy said. "I think this is the most returning starters we have ever had. The hard part now is getting them to work that much harder after falling short of a major goal last May."

Heading the list of returning stars is center fielder Brittany Rogers, a speedy junior who has become one of the nation's best leadoff hitters. Rogers hit .402 last season, just the ninth UA player to go over the .400 mark, to go with 48 stolen bases to set a new school record and help set the table for one of the country's best offenses. A key to success for any lead-off hitter, Rogers got on base often (.426 on-base percentage) and scored even more. Her 68 runs scored led the team that set a new SEC record for runs scored in a season with 463.

Her efforts earned a bevy of post-season honors for the Dacula, Ga., native. Rogers was named to the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) All-America second team and was an Easton first teamer after her spectacular season.

Lauren Parker, an upcoming junior, transferred to Bama from Baylor last year. She had a .457 batting average, the second-highest mark in school history, and joined Rogers on the Easton and NFCA squads after the impressive improvement. As a freshman with the Bears, Parker hit .266 with no home runs. A year later with Alabama, she improved her average by 191 percentage points and bashed nine homers.

Another key at the top of the lineup for the Tide was senior Jordan Praytor. She, too, is a speedy base-runner who helped her team set school and SEC records on the base paths. Praytor hit .367 on the year, with a .484 on-base percentage that ranked second on the team behind Parker among players with at least 50 at-bats. The Vancouver, Wash., product scored 50 runs, second on the team behind Rogers, and drove in 46.

The beneficiary of the stars of the top of the lineup was SEC Freshman of the Year Charlotte Morgan, who burst onto the scene in her first season of collegiate softball. Morgan blasted 11 home runs, tying for the team lead, and drove in 52 runs, best on the team.

Kelley Montalvo, a long-time fan favorite, had a monster sophomore season. The product of Miami had 11 home runs to tie Morgan atop the team leaderboard. She drove in 43 runs and scored 45 times.

Kellie Eubanks, an infielder who started 61 games last year as a sophomore, returns with a .230 batting average.

Also back is senior infielder Dani Woods, who started 54 games last year and had a .341 batting average.

Ashley Holcombe, a junior, is back to catch. Last year she batted .274.

With the bulk of one of the nation's best offenses returning, clearly the Crimson Tide will be an exciting

bunch with the sticks in hand. But as any softball fan knows, every championship team must have a talented pitching staff. Fortunately for Murphy, he's got that area covered.

Despite losing veteran Blair Potter last season, Murphy returns All-America Chrissy Owens as the cornerstone of the Tide pitching staff. Last season, Owens compiled a 24-5 mark, putting together a 1.30 ERA with 144 strikeouts. She posted 11 shutouts and combined for five others. The 11 shutouts was the second-highest single-season total in school history.

Allison Moore, who stayed at home to play for the Tide, appeared in three games and had a 1.35 ERA with 34 strikeouts and Morgan pitched in eight games for Alabama, recording 42 strikeouts.

"Our pitching staff lost a 20-game winner in Blair Potter, but we gained the Florida player of the year and the EA Sports National Player of the Year in Kelsi Dunne," Murphy said. "We are expecting a great defensive team with some of the best athletes we have had in our program in all positions."

Those sentiments certainly came to fruition in the fall season for the Tide. Alabama breezed through four games in the last two weekends in October, dispatching each of its fall opponents with the softball run-rule limit and outscoring teams from Wallace-Dothan, UA-Huntsville and Memphis by a combined score of 38-4.

Five players hit over .500 in the fall and four had at least five RBI in the four games. The Tide put together a team batting average of .432 and the pitching staff had an ERA of 0.91 in the four outings. The top of the UA lineup was extremely effective, setting the table for the lethal long-ball hitters in the middle of the lineup. In short, the Tide was as dominant in the fall as it has been in the SEC over the past decade.

But, as Murphy is well aware, it will all be different come February. The Tide faces another daunting schedule in the SEC in addition to several regular-season tournaments that will feature some of the top teams in college softball.

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Tuscaloosa, beginning with the Hampton Inn Bama Bash on February 8-10. That event features Purdue, Jacksonville State and South Alabama. The following weekend the Tide hosts the Hampton Inn Crimson Classic with teams from Georgia Tech, Middle Tennessee and New Mexico.

The next two weekends see the Tide traveling to Miami to compete in the Florida International Fun in the Sun tournament alongside FIU, UConn and Illinois and the University of Washington Husky Classic with Idaho State, Portland State, Nevada and hosting Washington, the team that eliminated the Tide in the NCAA Super Regionals a season ago in Seattle.

In addition to a non-conference game against Georgia Tech, Alabama will also face SEC tests against national powers from Tennessee, LSU and Georgia. The Tide will also play an exhibition contest against the USA Olympic team in Birmingham's Liberty Park in mid-April.

The 2008 SEC Tournament will be hosted by LSU in Baton Rouge from May 8-10, NCAA Regionals begin on May 16 and Super Regionals follow on May 23-24. The College World Series in Oklahoma City is set for May 29-June 4.

Alabama success is reflected in season ticket sales, which were over 1,200 last year and more than that going into this season.

Murphy and his team seem to be well on their way to yet another fantastic season on the diamond. Time will tell if the seasoned group of veterans and a talented bunch of freshmen are poised to make another trip to the College World Series, but initial indications are that those goals are certainly within reach. ■

Brittany Rogers is one of top stars on one of nation's top teams



University of Alabama

2008 Alabama Softball Roster

No	Name	Pos	B/T	Hgt	Class	Hometown
00	Kelsi Dunne	P	R/R	6-0	Frosh	Port Orange, Fla.
2	Jordan Praytor	UT	L/R	5-5	Senior	Vancouver, Wash.
4	Katie Johnson	C/OF	R/R	5-9	Senior	New Braunfels, Texas
5	Jessica Smith	UT	R/R	5-5	Soph	Pell City
6	Ashley Holcombe	C	R/R	5-6	Junior	Fayetteville, Ga.
7	Chrissy Owens	P	R/R	6-0	Senior	Miami, Fla.
8	Brittany Rogers	OF	L/R	5-6	Junior	Dacula, Ga.
10	Kelley Montalvo	UT	R/R	5-0	Junior	Miami, Fla.
13	Alex Blewitt	3B	R/R	5-11	Soph	Archibald, Penn.
15	Catherine Dozier	IF	R/R	5-7	Frosh	Vestavia Hills
16	Kellie Eubanks	IF	R/R	6-0	Junior	Prairieville, La.
17	Lauren Parker	IF	L/R	5-4	Junior	Port Neches, Texas
20	Whitney Larsen	UT	R/R	5-9	Frosh	Vestavia Hills
21	Allison Moore	P	R/R	5-11	Junior	Tuscaloosa
22	Amanda Locke	P	R/R	5-11	Frosh	Mesquite, Texas
23	Dani Woods	IF	L/L	5-5	Senior	Cockeysville, Md.
34	Charlotte Morgan	P/UT	R/L	5-10	Soph	Moreno Valley, Calif.

HEAD COACH: Patrick Murphy

ASSISTANT COACHES: Alyson Habetz and Vann Stuedeman

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Just Glad To Be Here

Mykal Riley has had dream come true

Myal Riley always loved basketball, even when it didn't love him back.

Now a 6-foot-6 senior guard and a fixture in Alabama's starting lineup, Riley admits there was a time when he "never would have imagined" ending up where he is now. Indeed, on college courts full of high school legends and AAU stars, Riley was never gifted such a reputation.

He just hoped to be a part of the game.

"I've been wanting to play since I was eight," Riley said. "Ever since I was little, that was my main sport, basketball. The start of it didn't go as I wanted to, but it ended up the way I wanted."

As Alabama heads into the meat of its 2007-08 schedule, much of its hopes fall on Riley, the best three-pointer shooter on a team in need of a perimeter threat to keep defenses honest against all-star forward Richard Hendrix.

Riley, who started 20 games as a junior and averaged 12.6 points, was brought on as the shooting complement to the program's inside-outside tandem of Ronald Steele and Hendrix. But with Steele taking a medical redshirt, Riley started slowly during the early stages this season.

His brightest November highlight was two back-to-back three-pointers in the final minute that nearly produced a dramatic comeback in a defeat to Belmont. He was part of an unlikely comeback win over Southeast Louisiana, when his three-pointer with 15 seconds was part of Bama's six-point comeback in that time frame to send the game into overtime. In overtime he was good on two treys as Alabama won.

"I don't think he's shot the ball yet like he really can," Gottfried said in late November. "We're kind of waiting for him to have a breakout night where he really lights it up and shoots it well. ... We've got the potential to be a good perimeter shooting team, and he's big part of that."

Given his importance to Alabama's program, it's astonishing to trace Riley's roots. Through ups and downs, perspective isn't a problem for Riley, considering the hurdles he jumped to join the Crimson Tide.

Riley thinks back to the way he was at his high school in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. One who knew him then would hardly recognize him now.

For starters, he was about seven inches shorter.

More than anything, he was painfully shy, a limitation that affected his ability in tryouts and organized games. Although he could shoot, he was afraid to launch the basketball enough for anyone to notice.

"When you're playing basketball, you can't be shy," Riley said. "You've got to play. I was just scared to do some stuff. I passed the ball a lot. I wouldn't do anything but pass it every time I got it."

After playing in eighth grade, Riley's school underwent a coaching change heading into his freshman year of high school. Riley was too withdrawn to approach the new coach, so he simply sat out that season.

The next year, he got up enough gumption to try out for

Sharp-shooting Mykal Riley is only senior regular for Bama men's basketball



University of Alabama

the squad, but he didn't make it. Riley wanted to be around basketball so much, he offered to stay on as Pine Bluff's manager, filming games and hanging around the team.

He describes the season as "torture."

"It was embarrassing, kind of," Riley said. "It wasn't like I was a water boy or anything like that. I had to watch basketball at the time, but I wanted to play."

Riley doesn't claim to be some undiscovered talent. He confesses he "didn't do real well" as a basketball player in those days.

But he was stubborn.

"It made me work harder," he said. "I never did think about giving it up."

He tried out again as junior with similar results. He was cut from the team. Coaches noticed by then, however, that Riley had grown four inches in the previous year, which is why they offered him a spot on the junior varsity squad.

About that time, Riley began looking for pick-up games with collegiate players, which he said helped more than anything. He made the team as a senior and wound up in 2003-04 at Ouachita Baptist, a Division II program in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. After a season there, Riley transferred to junior college in Panola, Texas, where his game began to finally flourish for an up-tempo, high-scoring team.

"They're breaking. They're trying to score 100 every night," said Alabama Assistant Coach Philip Pearson, who began scouting Riley at Panola. "He'd streak down on the right-hand side, and he could shoot it, I mean, really, really shoot it."

"I always could shoot," Riley said. "It was just a little more where I could show it. The coach gave me the green light in junior college, and that's been my mindset ever since."

Pearson brought Gottfried to watch Riley play, but after Riley averaged 18.4 points his sophomore year, former UAB Coach Mike Anderson signed him before departing for Missouri in March 2006.

New Blazers hire Mike Davis wasn't sure about Riley, and when he dropped him from the letter of intent, the Tide was ready to pounce.

"Mark and I went out there the next day," Pearson said. "He came on a visit, and we signed him. Thank goodness we did. He's a good player."

Riley found quick success at Alabama. He tied for the team lead with 17 points in his opening game, a 96-65 victory over Jacksonville State.

He led the Tide in steals (42). He topped 20 points four times and scored in double-figures in 25 of 32 games, including 11 of the final 12, making Riley a silver lining on a team that slumped to the finish line and missed the NCAA tournament.

In the first-round NIT loss at Massachusetts, Riley scored a season-best 24 points, hitting five 3-pointers to soar into his senior year.

Riley has turned to other areas this season. Gottfried's biggest criticism thus far has been on defense.

"He's improving defensively," Gottfried said earlier this season. "He's getting better. I don't know that physically he can be a great, great on-ball defender. Sometimes, you're limited a little bit just the way your body is made. You know, I'd like to run a three-minute mile, but I can't. I just can't do it. But his effort has been great."

Which shouldn't be surprising. As proof, Pearson said Riley is the only SEC player he knows of that was twice cut from his high school basketball team.

"You just never know how you're going to get a player," Pearson said. "They come in all different shapes and sizes. You've got to keep turning over rocks until you find the right one." ■

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Prep Prospects

Tide football coaching staff finishing job



Julio Jones



Jerrell Harris



Antoine McClain

For many, many weeks it has appeared Alabama football recruiting was all but complete. As Football Signing Day—always the first Wednesday in February, and this year February 6—approached, however, there were important tasks for the Crimson Tide coaching staff. Although there have been verbal pledges by prospects to The University, those "commitments" are not binding. Additionally, there were some high profile prospects with Bama high on their lists who were not yet in the fold.

Top uncommitted in-state prospects into the New Year include Scout.com five star Julio Jones (Foley), four-star linebacker Jerrell Harris (Gadsden City) and four-star offensive lineman Antoine McClain (Anniston).

Coach Nick Saban has visited the top recruits for in-home visits and hosted them on official visits to The University. Saban seems never to sleep as the Alabama jet criss-crosses the country for the final push of recruiting the class of 2008. Julio Jones was the first prospect Saban visited followed by a next day visit to Gadsden to see Jerrell Harris.

Alabama started the month of December ranked seventh in the nation in recruiting according to Scout.com, and by the middle of the month that rating had moved to third in the nation. With an elite group of prospects considering Alabama remaining on the board, a high finish is assured.

The Alabama coaching staff had specific needs when recruiting the class of 2008 and hoped to secure several top commitments on the defensive side of the ball with an

emphasis at linebacker and defensive line. Another top priority was offensive tackle. Alabama landing an elite quarterback and a group of top flight receivers also was a priority.

The Tide landed monster Scout.com four-star defensive tackle in November when Terrance Cody of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Perkinston committed to Alabama. Cody, a native of Fort Myers, Florida, is a massive 6-5, 395-pounds. He will graduate from junior college in May, then will have three years to play two when he arrives in Tuscaloosa.

Kerry Murphy (Hargrave Military Academy) signed with Alabama out of Hoover High School and hopes to join the team in August. Murphy spent the fall at Hargrave Military Academy in Virginia, where he played both offensive tackle and defensive tackle. He could find a home on the offensive line.

Damian Square of Yates High School in Houston, Texas, is a National 100 strongside linebacker, but expects to play on the defensive line for Alabama. Thus, Bama seems on track for the defensive tackle priority in this recruiting class with Cody, Murphy and Square.

Alabama has also secured prospects at defensive end. Two players from the Birmingham area, Undra Billingsley (Woodlawn) and Brandon Lewis (Pleasant Grove), are the only two prospects who clearly are headed for defensive end. A handful of committed prospects are listed as defensive end commitments, but will move to other positions such as linebacker.

Saban knew a big need included an elite group of

linebackers. He has landed two who have played mainly defensive end in high school, but likely are changing positions. They include Dont'a Hightower (Marshall County High School in Lewisburg, Tennessee) and Courtney Upshaw (Eufaula).

A surprise is Alabama not having any cornerback commitments and only two true defensive backs on the pledge list. Saban, a defensive-minded head coach and a former defensive back, has his eyes on a couple of targets who had said they would not make decisions until after five official visits.

One of the two committed is Tide legacy Wesley Neighbors (Huntsville), a Scout.com three-star safety. His grandfather, Billy Neighbors, was a consensus All-America for Alabama in 1961 and inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2004. He played 11 seasons in the NFL. His father, Wes Neighbors, also was drafted after his Crimson Tide career.

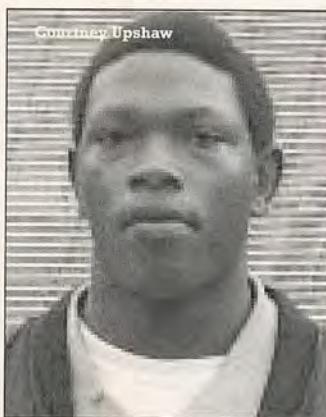
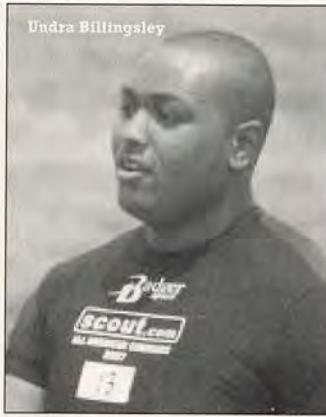
Robert Lester (Foley), Scout.com three-star safety, had a great senior season and earned a scholarship offer from the Tide following the first few games of 2007. He committed shortly after receiving the offer, but has since said he is looking at some other schools with teammate Julio Jones.

A few offensive commitments who may move to defense when they arrive in Tuscaloosa include:

Mark Barron (Mobile St. Paul's), Scout.com four-star receiver, will likely move to safety; Devonta Bolton (Norcross, Georgia), may play H-back on offense, but the early best guess is a move to either linebacker or safety.

One position question is the electric athlete Burton Scott, Scout.com four-star receiver from Vigor High School in Prichard. Scott is one of the most amazing prospects in the country with the ball in his hands, but there is a great chance for playing on Sundays (NFL) if he decides to move to cornerback or safety. Scott's heart is on offense, but he'll play where needed.

While the emphasis of the recruiting year was on defense the Alabama coaching staff also had priorities on offense. Perhaps the player of the future for Alabama is Star Jackson of Lake Worth, Florida, a Scout.com four-star quarterback. Jackson is a dual-threat prospect who is a quarterback who is an athlete, rather than an athlete who is a quarterback. There



are no plans for Jackson to change positions.

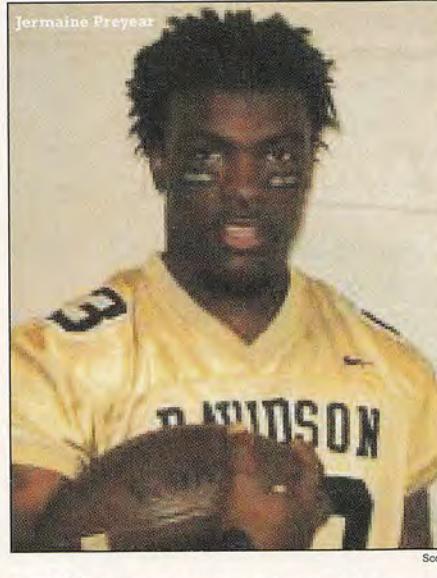
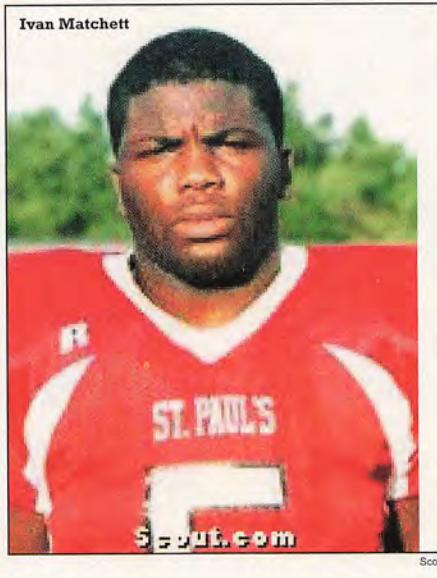
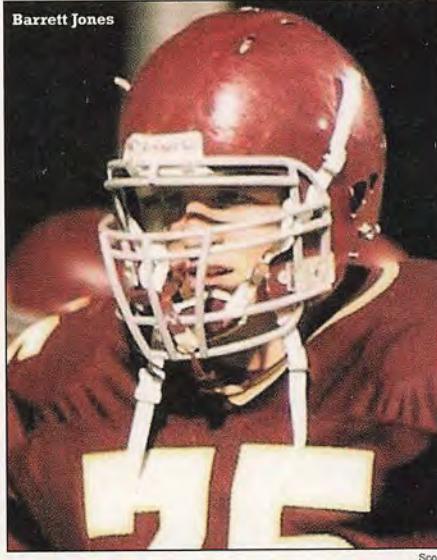
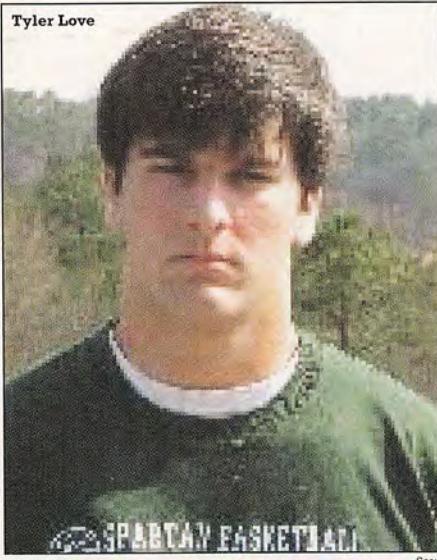
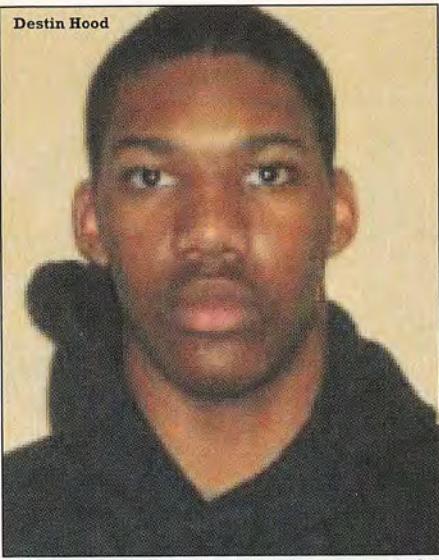
Wide receiver was another very important position to fill for the class of 2008 with the graduation of D.J. Hall, Matt Caddell and Keith Brown. Alabama has a handful of wide receiver commitments, but only a few expect to play the position in Tuscaloosa.

Melvin Ray of North Florida Christian in Tallahassee and Destin Hood of Mobile St. Paul's are the only two true wide receiver commitments. Burton Scott may end up playing receiver, and the Tide faithful believe Julio Jones will be in that group. Brad Smelley of American Christian in Tuscaloosa plays quarterback and safety, but expects to be an H-back.

The best-filled position is offensive tackle with commitments Tyler Love (Mountain Brook), Barrett Jones (Evangelical Christian in Cordova, Tennessee), and John Michael Boswell (Tuscaloosa County). All three were at the top of Alabama's wish list. Look for the staff to sign one more offensive tackle in this year's class.

Tide commitment Michael Williams (Pickens County High in Reform), Scout.com four-star defensive end, expects to play tight end for the Tide. Williams starred at both defensive end and tight end for his high school team. He spent time on his official visit in Tuscaloosa discussing the future position.

Alabama has received commitments from three running backs in Ivan Matchett (Mobile St. Paul's), Jermaine Preyear (Mobile Davidson) and Chris Jordan (Brentwood Academy in Brentwood, Tennessee). Matchett helped lead his team to the Class 5A state championship. Running back did not appear as



a priority position, but Alabama elected to sign three in this year's class.

The Tide received a commitment from kicker/punter Corey Smith (Bunker Hill High in Musselman, West Virginia), and he had announced plans to enroll for the spring semester, which began in January.

Alabama has a few committed prospects who plan to visit other schools before National Signing Day. Upon his arrival in Tuscaloosa a year ago, Saban revealed his policy of "you shop, we shop." That meant one "committed" to Bama, but still visiting other schools, might not have a scholarship from the Crimson Tide.

Most of the prospects in the class of 2007 who were looking at other schools were not Saban's recruits, but recruited by Mike Shula, Bama's previous coach. It's possible Saban would not have recruited those who wanted to look at other choices, but the class of 2008 all belong to the current head coach.

Melvin Ray said he planned to visit Florida State,

Georgia and possibly LSU. His summer commitment to Alabama and the building of relationships with current Tide commitments may keep him secure, but Florida State is putting on a lot of pressure with the four-star receiver to stay home and play for the Seminoles.

Courtney Upshaw said he planned to visit LSU and Auburn. The real competition is LSU. Upshaw has been very interested in the Bengal Tigers, and they have shown a lot of interest in him. The AU Tigers continue to recruit the four-star from East Alabama.

Michael Williams planned to visit Georgia Tech, but after the firing of Coach Chan Gailey the visit did not appear likely.

There was early concern Brad Smelley would follow his brother, Chris, to South Carolina, but Brad is solid with the Tide.

All other Tide commitments are firm with their verbal pledges to The University of Alabama. Indeed, they proved to be a good recruiting class in two ways. One, their talent puts Bama among the nation's best in recruiting. And, two, they worked to entice others to The Capstone.

FOOTBALL HOT LIST

How many will Alabama sign? A school may bring in 25 new signees next August. The Crimson Tide seems likely to sign far more than 25. Here are those considered to be on Bama's recruiting list, including those already committed to sign on February 6.

Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Wgt.	40	Hometown (High School)	Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Wgt.	40	Hometown (High School)					
Michael Abernathy	FB	5-11	235	4.5	Russellville	*Brandon Lewis	DE	6-3	260	N/A	Pleasant Grove					
Ken Adams	TE	6-5	215	N/A	Enterprise	*Tyler Love	OL	6-7	270	N/A	Birmingham (Mtn Brook)					
T.J. Barnes	OT	6-6	320	N/A	Enterprise	Chris Martin	DT	6-5	290	N/A	Ft Wln Bch, Fla. (Ch'ct'wh'tee)					
*Mark Barron	WR	6-2	205	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)	*Ivan Matchett	RB	5-10	205	4.6	Mobile (St. Paul's)					
Andre Berry	WR	6-3	195	N/A	Tarrant	Antoine McClain	OT	6-6	313	N/A	Anniston					
*Undra Billingsley	TE	6-3	245	N/A	Birmingham (Woodlawn)	Greg McGrue	OT	6-8	350	5.4	Birmingham (Huffman)					
*Devonta Bolton	WR	6-4	210	4.5	Norcross, Ga.	Caleb Mitchell	CB	6-0	175	4.4	Russellville					
*John Michael Boswell	OL	6-5	290	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Tuscaloosa Co)	Dekendrick Moncrief	WR	6-0	175	N/A	Prattville					
Deandre Brown	WR	6-6	225	4.5	Ocean Springs, Miss.	*Kerry Murphy	DT	6-5	315	5.3	Hoover (Hargrave Acad.)					
Justin Brown	WR	5-9	152	N/A	Athens	*Wesley Neighbors	S	6-2	195	4.55	Huntsville					
T.J. Bryant	CB	6-0	.175	N/A	Tallahassee, Fla. (Lincoln)	Morgan Ogilvie	QB	6-1	185	4.7	Birmingham (Mtn Brook)					
Chase Clement	DE	6-5	240	4.7	Thibodaux, La. (E.D. White)	Quinton Pierce	WR	6-2	185	4.5	Mobile (Davidson)					
*Terrance Cody	DT	6-5	385	N/A	Perkinston, Miss (Gulf Coast)	DeMario Pippen	RB	5-10	185	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)					
Teavis Durgin	OT	6-6	295	N/A	Daphne	Lavanda Powe	DT	6-5	225	N/A	Silas (Southern Choctaw)					
Tyler Edwards	TE	6-4	235	4.7	Monroe, La. (Ouachita Parish)	*Jermaine Preyear	RB	5-11	195	N/A	Mobile (Davidson)					
LaVar Edwards	TE	6-3	284	N/A	Btn Rge, La. (Desire St. Acad.)	Spencer Pybus	LB	6-1	200	N/A	Dothan (Northview)					
Marty Everett	DT	6-4	288	4.9	Bushnell, Fla. (South Sumter)	Robert Quinn	DE	6-4	255	4.7	No Chston, SV (Ft. Dorchester)					
*Robby Green	CB	6-0	180	4.4	River Ridge, La. (John Curtis)	*Melvin Ray	WR	6-3	205	4.5	Tllssee, Fla. (No. Fla. Chris.)					
William Green	DE	6-5	208	N/A	Birmingham (Spain Park)	Justin Rogers	RB	5-11	180	4.5	Vestavia Hills					
Dévon Hairston	S	6-1	175	N/A	Enterprise	*Burton Scott	WR	5-10	190	4.4	Prichard (Vigor)					
Glenn Harbin	DE	6-5	230	N/A	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)	*Brad Smelley	WR	6-3	215	N/A	Tuscaloosa (American Chrt)					
Jerrell Harris	LB	6-3	208	4.5	Gadsden (Gadsden City)	*Corey Smith	K	6-0	190	N/A	Bnker Hill, WV (Musselman)					
*Dont'a Hightower	LB/DE	6-2	245	4.7	Lewisburg, Tn. (Marshall Co.)	P.J. Smith	S	6-4	190	4.5	River Ridge, La. (John Curtis)					
Chris Hood	QB	6-1	190	N/A	Birmingham (Huffman)	*Damian Square	DL	6-3	275	4.75	Houston, Texas (Yates)					
*Destin Hood	WR	6-2	182	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)	Korey Suggs	LB	6-1	210	N/A	Russellville					
*Chris Jackson	WR	6-1	190	N/A	McDonough, Ga. (Henry Co.)	Dallas Thomas	OT	6-5	252	5.27	Btn Rouge, La. (Scotlandville)					
*Star Jackson	QB	6-3	185	4.5	Lake Worth, Fla.	Jacoby Thomas	LB	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mobile (Murphy)					
Terrell Jackson	LB	6-1	190	N/A	Prattville	Chris Toliver	WR	6-2	205	4.5	Rayville, La.					
Toby Jackson	DE	6-4	240	N/A	Griffin, Ga.	Zack Townley	CB	5-11	185	4.65	Winfield					
*Barrett Jones	OT	6-5	270	N/A	Cordova, Tn. (Evngical Chrt)	*Courtney Upshaw	DE	6-2	225	N/A	Eufaula					
Julio Jones	WR	6-4	212	4.5	Foley	Marsellos Wilder	WR	6-2	190	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)					
*Chris Jordan	RB	6-2	208	4.5	Brentw'd, Tn. (B'wood Acad.)	Jeremy Williams	QB	6-0	200	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)					
Anthony Landrum	RB	6-1	205	4.6	Sweet Water	*Michael Williams	DE	6-6	240	4.7	Reform (Pickens County)					
*Robert Lester	S	6-2	205	4.6	Foley	*Committed to Alabama										

Where Are They Now?

Lowe helped Tide regain bowl-winning form

Woodrow Lowe called it an unspoken truth. And what was that truth? Alabama hadn't won a bowl game in eight straight tries.

Monkey on the back? This was becoming more like a full-sized King Kong. But Lowe said he and his teammates on the 1975 Crimson Tide squad talked little about the streak, and that's how they wanted it to be.

"A lot of psychologists tell you that the best way to deal with a problem is to talk through it," said Lowe, now 53. "That doesn't work all the time, and that wasn't going to work in our case. What we had that year was what you would call a quiet motivation. You knew your teammates felt the same way you did about the streak, and you could look in their eyes and see that. You didn't need to say anything. Of course, on top of all that, there is such a thing as getting tired of getting beat on, and we had gotten tired of it."

Alabama had already gone 0-4-1 in the five previous bowl trips prior to Lowe's arrival on campus in 1972. Then things only got worse. First came a 17-13 loss to Texas in the Cotton Bowl to end the 1972 season. Alabama posted a perfect 11-0 regular season mark in 1973 and even though the Tide was named by UPI as national champion, it certainly didn't feel that way after it lost to Notre Dame, 24-23, in the Sugar Bowl. The Tide again posted an 11-0 regular season record in 1974 and again lost to Notre Dame in a bowl—this time the Orange Bowl, and this time by a 13-11 margin.

The Tide's eight-year bowl record now stood at 0-7-1. "Bowl" was becoming a bad word in Alabama.

So when Alabama geared up to play Penn State in the Sugar Bowl following the 1975 regular season, few people gave the Tide a chance. Everyone braced for a ninth straight season of Alabama going winless in its final game. But the Alabama players, particularly Lowe and his fellow seniors, were more determined than ever to reverse the Tide's recent post-season fortunes.

"Coach (Paul) Bryant didn't put a lot of pressure on us for that game, but we all knew how important it was to him," Lowe said. "We could read the newspapers. This one was very, very important, and we wanted to win it for him. And we did."



Final score: Alabama 13, Penn State 6.

"Personally, it felt so good to get that bowl losing streak off my back," Lowe said. "We had been there four years, and we had finally won a bowl game to relinquish that stigma. Coach Bryant thanked all of us after that win. He was very happy."

The 1975 Sugar Bowl win was a fitting conclusion to Lowe's illustrious career at Alabama. The 6-foot, 211-pounder earned All-America honors following his sophomore, junior and senior seasons, becoming the first of only two players at Alabama to earn All-America three times. (Cornelius Bennett became the second a decade later.)

Lowe's best statistical season came in 1973 when he registered 134 tackles, six stops behind the line and three interceptions. He helped the Tide to four SEC titles and an overall record of 43-5 during his four years. He went on to be named to Alabama's Team of the Decade for the 1970s and even had a spring practice award named after him—the Woodrow Lowe Most Improved Linebacker award.

Lowe, though, credits his coaches and teammates for any individual success and accolades that came his way over the years. He also credits a former Alabama star linebacker, Lee Roy Jordan, for serving as his inspiration.

"I always remembered Lee Roy Jordan, and we all wanted to be like him and carry on the tradition," Lowe said. "In my very first NFL preseason, I actually got to play against Jordan, and I think that was his last year with the Dallas Cowboys. He was the consummate player."

Lowe was a fifth-round draft pick of the San Diego Chargers in 1976 and played his entire 12-year career with the franchise. (Following the draft announcement, Bryant said, "Getting Woodrow Lowe in the fifth round is like getting a \$50 gold piece for 50 cents.") Although the San Diego offense, led by quarterback Dan Fouts, drew most of the attention during that era, the San Diego defense, Lowe said, wasn't too shabby either, particularly in the late 1970s before the nucleus of that defense was broken up in the 1980s. Lowe was a big reason for San Diego's defensive success, but he didn't become a top-notch linebacker over-night.

"I had to evolve as a linebacker," he said. "Coming from Alabama, I was good against the run, but I was dreadful against the pass. I couldn't stop a trap pass, but I just kept getting better and better."

In a 1987 preseason game, Lowe suffered a knee injury that, under normal circumstances, would not have been career ending. But when the league went on strike that season, Lowe wasn't able to rehab the knee properly, and by the end of the

Woodrow Lowe was three-time Bama All-America linebacker



University of Alabama

season, the Chargers decided to make Lowe a player/coach. Although Lowe considered making a comeback in 1988, the fact that no teams showed interest in him as a full-time player led him to stick with the coaching side of the game and pursue a career in that arena.

Coaching seemed to come naturally for Lowe. While it was in the NFL where he honed his technical skills, it was at Alabama under Bryant that Lowe learned how to relate to and inspire others.

"One of the most important things I learned from Coach Bryant was perseverance," said Lowe, who coaches high school players today. "You never give up and you never quit. If you start something, you better finish it. I say a lot of the things Coach Bryant said to me years ago. It's a part of me. It's inside me. He used to tell us if we did something good once, we can do it again, and if we make a good play, act like you're used to it. You don't need to show your tail feathers."

Even after players left Alabama, Lowe noted, Bryant still showed his care and concern for each one of them.

"Every year when I was in the NFL, Coach Bryant would send me a telegram during the preseason," Lowe said. "He would always write: 'Have a good year, don't get hurt and show your class.' I'm sure he did that with all of us who played for him. I still have one of those telegrams framed just as a reminder to myself. Coach Bryant was always thinking of us. Whether you were in the NFL or not, if you had gone through his regimen, he'd never forget you."

After leaving the Chargers, Lowe coached high school ball for a few years before joining Marty Schottenheimer's Kansas City Chiefs staff in 1995. He spent four seasons there before joining the Oakland Raiders staff in 1999. In 2000,

Lowe's mother, Betty, was diagnosed with cancer, so the Phenix City native left Oakland to take a job with UAB so he could be closer to home. He served on Watson Brown's staff for four seasons.

Lowe's mother died in November 2002.

"My dad was a hard worker, a brick mason," Lowe said, "and my mom was the cement, the concrete, the mortar of our family. I was glad I got to be near her in her final years, but when you lose your mom, you can't ever say you did enough. One thing I learned from going through that loss was that you can never give up on life."

Lowe was hired as head football coach and athletics director at Smith Station High

School in 2004 and continues in those roles today. He couldn't be happier and plans on staying in coaching—be it the prep, college or pro level—as long as possible.

"I love the teaching part and the giving back part," he said. "That's what motivates me and keeps me going."

The past three seasons have been particularly satisfying for Lowe because he was able to coach his youngest son, Benjamin, a 6-foot-2, 205-pounder tight end/receiver, who is considering walking on at Alabama. Lowe and wife, Linda, have three other children—Woodrow Jr., 31, Briana, 28, and Adrienne, 26—who are already University of Alabama alums, a definite point of pride for dad.

(His nephew, Jonathan, is a Crimson Tide running back and kick return specialist. Jonathan is the son of Woodrow's brother, Eddie, also a former Bama linebacker.)

For Woodrow Lowe, The University of Alabama is as near and dear to his heart today as it's ever been. Without it, he said, he never would have accomplished the things he did as a player and he never would have become the coach he is today. And while many Alabama fans remember Number 47 as one of the Tide's all-time great linebackers and one of the players who helped put the Tide back on its bowl-winning ways, the ever-humble Lowe thinks of himself differently.

"I just want to be remembered as being crimson through and through," he said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Woodrow Lowe is one of some 62 former Alabama players who tell their story of "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide" in the book by 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair, with Gene Stallings. It can be ordered by calling (205) 345-5074. \$27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling.

'BAMA Scorecard

Notebooking Crimson Tide Sports

FINISHING THE JOB

Better late than never. Joe Namath is best known for his promise in 1969. He was quarterback of the New York Jets preparing to face the Baltimore Colts of Coach Don Shula for the championship of professional football—what would come to be known as the Super Bowl. Namath guaranteed a Jets victory against the prohibitive-favorite Colts. And Namath delivered.

He made a less well-known pledge several years later. He promised to go back to college and earn his degree from The University of Alabama.

In December, Namath made good on that promise, too. He was one of more than 900 graduates participating in Alabama graduation ceremony at Coleman Coliseum.

He had been some 15 hours short of graduation requirements when he left The University following the Orange Bowl at the end of the 1964 season to join the Jets. As Broadway Joe—football player and later entrepreneur and actor—there was no time to complete those courses.

Over the past five years, Namath has worked to complete the requirement for his bachelor's degree through UA's External Degree program, known as EXD.

EXD, an interdisciplinary program that allows adults to complete requirements for a bachelor's degree from UA, is the distance version of New College, a division of the College of Arts and Sciences. More than 1,500 students have graduated through this program, which was founded in 1973.

Namath was joined by six members of the 2007 Crimson Tide squad who were awarded degrees at winter commencement. They are Wallace Gilberry, Eric Gray, Darren Mustin, Nikita Stover, Fores Rayford and Matt Collins.

Six other members of the 2007 team had previously earned degrees. They are Antoine Caldwell, Chris Capps, Matt Caddell, Jamie Christensen, Joshua Curry (all in August) and Keith Saunders (May, 2007).

Among others earning degrees in December were current Alabama basketball players Mykal Riley, Ron Steele and John Dill.

IT COULD GET BETTER

Whereas one might think that things couldn't get much better for Alabama's men's cross country team, the future looks very bright. Alabama finished sixth in the nation at the NCAA Championships in Terre Haute, Indiana, the best finish in school history.

Harvey Glance, head track coach for Bama, said, "I'm extremely proud of this team and (Cross Country Coach Joe Walker). The guys ran a great race. With everyone returning next year, we are in position to win the Southeastern Conference and make a run at the NCAA title in 2008."

Alabama's previous best finish in the NCAA cross country

championships was seventh in 1989. The Crimson Tide was in contention for the national title, holding in third place through about the 9-kilometer mark.

Augustus Maiyo led the way for Alabama, earning All-America for his 18th place finish in a time of 30:12.8 over the 10-kilometer course. It was his second All-America honor for Maiyo, who was also honored in the 2006 outdoor track season. The race had over 250 athletes and 31 teams. The only other SEC team was Arkansas, which finished 190 points behind Bama in 23rd place.

Freshman Andrew Kirwa just missed All-America honors in the 36th spot with his time of 30:35.3. He was the second freshman to come across the line. Sophomore Emmanuel Bor was the Tide's third finisher with a time of 30:37.8, in 44th place. He was in the lead pack until the 9k mark reaching as high as sixth place with less than a kilometer to go.

In fourth for the Tide was junior Abraham Kutingala, who ran 30:42.6 and finished 54th. Rounding out the Tide scorers was Titus Koeh with a time of 32:00.8.

"We are walking away with our heads held very high," Walker said. "Our top four guys ran almost to perfection. We slipped a little bit at the end, but I am extremely proud of the team."

WALKER HONORED

Alabama's season-long cross country success did not go unnoticed by the men and women who coach the sport. The United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) named Alabama Men's Cross Country Coach Joe Walker as the NCAA South Region Coach of the Year.

"There is no doubt in my mind that Coach Walker deserves to be the coach of the year for our region," Tide Track Coach Harvey Glance said. "He has done an outstanding job with our cross country team year in and year out and now has us on the verge of being a top 10 national program every season."

Even before the NCAA Championship meet, Walker had led the Tide to one of the programs best seasons in school history, being ranked as high as eighth in the national polls this season and ranked as the top team in the South Region throughout the season. Alabama won the NCAA South Regional last weekend for the fourth time in the last seven seasons under Walker.

At the NCAA South Regional the 17th-ranked Tide turned in a score of 28 points, which was 24 points ahead of second place Florida State and 54 points ahead of 24th ranked Florida which finished third.

All five of the Tide's scorers at that meet finished in the top 14 and earned All-South Region Team. Sophomore Emmanuel Bor finished in second place, junior Augustus Maiyo was third place, freshman Andrew Kirwa was fourth place, junior Abraham Kutingala was in sixth place and junior Titus

Koeh rounded out the Tide scorers with a 14th place finish over the 10-kilometer course.

"It is always an honor when you are recognized by your peers," Walker said. "I want to give a lot of credit to Coach Glance. It is under his direction that we have put together the style of team he wants us to have."

Sophomore Emmanuel Bor won the Southeastern Conference individual championship and was named the SEC's Male Athlete of the Year earlier this season. Freshman Andrew Kirwa was the top freshman finisher at the SEC Championships and earned SEC Freshman of the Year.

"Since taking over the cross country and track & field programs here at Alabama I have made sure that cross country is a priority. We have put a lot of scholarships in that area. I want us to be extremely competitive in all three seasons of cross, indoor and outdoor," Glance added.

RECORD-SETTER

Alabama Swimming and Diving sophomore Agustina de Giovanni shattered the school record in the 400 individual medley and posted a career-best mark in the 100 breaststroke on the way to winning both events at Auburn this year..

"We had some great swims," Alabama Coach Eric McIlquham said. "Obviously Agustina had an amazing meet, putting up career best times and demolishing the school record in the 400 IM."

De Giovanni posted a 4:15.81, eight seconds ahead of her nearest competition and two and a half seconds better than the previous 400 IM school mark set by former Tide All-America and Olympic bronze medalist Anne Poleska in 2003. In the 100 breaststroke de Giovanni took first with a 1:02.78, which moves her to fifth all-time for the Crimson Tide.

SOFTBALL HONORS

In addition to racking up another 50-win season and earning a stack of post-season awards for its performance on the field, the Alabama softball team received some more recognition for its efforts in the classroom. Five individuals earned National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) All-America Scholar-Athlete Awards.

Infielder Kellie Eubanks, catcher Ashley Holcombe, pitcher/infielder Charlotte Morgan and outfielders Jordan Praytor and Brittany Rogers earned the honor on the strength of their academic performances in the 2006-07 school year.

"We are very proud of these five young ladies," said Alabama Coach Pat Murphy. "They are doing the very best thing both on and off the field."

The Tide, recently named by the NFCA as one of the top 50 academic teams in college softball, continued to earn academic honors for its individuals. Alabama had 12 members on the Southeastern Conference Academic Honor Roll last spring, including all five of the NFCA's

honorees.

Six players, including Rogers, Morgan and Praytor, earned NFCA All-Region honors for their accomplishments on the field and Rogers earned NFCA All-American honors for her achievements on the diamond last season.

The Tide wrapped up its fall season in late October with a perfect 4-0 mark. Alabama beat all four teams by the run-rule limit in wins over Wallace-Dothan, Alabama-Huntsville and the University of Memphis.

TIDE SLIPS TO THIRD

The Alabama men's golf team slipped from number two to number three in the final fall poll conducted by Golf World and Nike Golf Division for Division I coaches.

Georgia replaced Charlotte at the top spot, earning 11 of the 24 first-place votes. Charlotte is second, followed by Alabama which received three first-place votes, UCLA, Georgia Tech, Oklahoma State, Southern California, Stanford, Duke, Florida, Florida State, Clemson, Auburn, Chattanooga, South Carolina, Michigan State, Wake Forest, Pepperdine, Texas Tech, Penn State, Lamar, Indiana, Tennessee and Virginia Tech at number 23, and North Carolina 25th.

Alabama won two tournament championships this fall, the Carpet Capital Collegiate and the Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate and placed second in another tournament.

VOLLEYBALL ALL-REGION

Alabama senior volleyball player Crystal Hudson was named to the All South Region team for the second consecutive year, it was announced by the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

"I am very excited for Crystal being a repeat selection to

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the AVCA All South Region team," said Alabama Coach Judy Green. "This is a great honor for both her and our volleyball program here at the University of Alabama."

The Hueytown native earned the honor after being named to the All-SEC First Team earlier in the season. Hudson led the team in kills, hitting percentage, block assists and total blocks this season and ended the year ranked in the conference stats in hitting percentage and kills per game. The middle blocker posted a .371 hitting percentage, good enough for third in the SEC, and tallied 3.81 kills per game, good enough for seventh in the conference.

Six additional members of the Southeastern Conference joined Hudson on the All South Region team. Hudson will compete with the best players around the nation for a spot on one of three All-America teams to be announced later.

Additionally, Hudson was joined by senior Bridget Fuentez on the All-SEC team for the second consecutive year.

"I am very proud of Bridget and Crystal," said Green. "Both of these young women are very worthy of these honors. Without their commitment to becoming the best player they could possibly be and the support of their teammates, honors like these would be unattainable. They have always and will continue to represent the University of Alabama in a classy way."

Hudson, a senior middle blocker, averaged a .371 hitting percentage to finish third in hitting percentage in the conference and led Alabama to a third place team finish in the same category. Hudson also tallied 3.81 kills per game and finished in the top 10. She led the Tide in kills, kills per game, hitting percentage, block attempts, total blocks and blocks per game this season. The award is the second consecutive All-SEC first team honor for Hudson.

Fuentez, a senior outside hitter from Tomball, Texas, finished eighth in the SEC in kills with 291 and averaged 3.78 per game. The two-time All-SEC second team selection finished second for the Tide in the same category. Fuentez led Alabama in total attempts with 930 and was second for the Tide in kills with 291. Fuentez also tallied 267 digs, good for second on the team.

FORMER TRACK STAR HONORED

Alabama track & field legend Calvin Smith headlines a group of five inductees for the National Track & Field Hall of Fame Class of 2007. The inductees, announced by USA Track & Field, also include Veteran athletes Glenn Morris and George Woods, as well as former UCLA coaching great Elvin C. "Ducky" Drake and Olympian Jane Frederick.

The Class of 2007 was inducted at the Jesse Owens Awards and Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, held in conjunction with USATF's 2007 Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii.

"Induction into the National Track & Field Hall of Fame is the ultimate honor for our athletes and coaches, and these five special individuals richly deserve this recognition of their remarkable careers," said USATF President Bill Roe. "We look forward to honoring them in Honolulu as they take their well-earned place among the all-time greats of American track and field."

One of America's finest sprinters, Calvin Smith was a two-time World Outdoor Championships 200-meter gold medalist, the 1988 Olympic Games 100m bronze medalist and a former world record holder at 100 meters.

While with the Tide, Smith earned eight All-America citations

and won the NCAA 200 meter championship in 1983. He also finished second to Alabama teammate Emmit King in the 1983 NCAA 100 meters race with a time of 10.16 to King's 10.15. Smith also won the Southeastern Conference championship in 1983 with a time of 10.24 in the 100 meters, he won three other SEC titles as a member of relay teams.

Known for his smooth, efficient running style and his quiet demeanor, Smith was one of the finest 100 and 200 competitors in history. After completing his eligibility at The Capstone in the spring of 1983 he set the 100-meter world record of 9.93 seconds (on July 3, 1983), bettering the previous record set by Jim Hines that stood for almost 15 years. Later that summer, at the inaugural World Outdoor Championships in Helsinki, Smith won gold medals in the 200 meters and the 4x100m relay, in addition to the silver medal in the 100 meters.

At the 1987 World Outdoors in Rome, Smith successfully defended his world 200 title. At the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, he won the gold medal in the 4x100m relay, teaming up with Sam Graddy, Ron Brown and Carl Lewis in setting the then world record of 37.83 seconds. Also in Olympic competition, Smith won the 100m bronze medal at the 1988 Games in Seoul, Korea. The 1982 USA Outdoor 200m champ, Smith was world-ranked 10 times at 100 meters, and world-ranked seven times at 200 meters (number 1 in 1983) by Track & Field News.

ASHOF Inductees

One former Alabama football star and one former Crimson Tide golf standout will be among those inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame this year.

Former Tide All-America football star Don McNeal and ex-Bama golfer (and PGA performer) Steve Lowery were selected in this year's class.

The newly elected inductees bring the total since 1969 to 275. The 2008 induction banquet will take place in the Birmingham Ballroom, at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel, Saturday, May 31. Reception and banquet tickets will be available at a later date.

Don McNeal, a native of Atmore, was captain of the Alabama football team in 1980. He was named to the Alabama Team of the Century in 1992 and was a member of two national championship teams at Bama (1978 and 1979). He played 10 years with the Miami Dolphins and was twice named Dolphins Player of the Year (1982 and 1984). He played in two Super Bowls with Miami and was named to the Dolphins Silver Anniversary Team in 1996.

Steve Lowery, a native of Birmingham, attended Berry High School (now Hoover). After a great prep career he went to Alabama where he was SEC Player of the Year and an All-America in both 1982 and 1983. He turned professional and in 1992 won the Ben Hogan Tulsa Open on the Nationwide Tour. On the PGA Tour he has won the 1994 Spring International and the 2000 Southern Farm Bureau Classic. He ranks in the top 50 on the all time PGA money list.

Also selected were former Auburn football player Gregg Carr, former Tennessee quarterback Condredge Holloway, former major league baseball player Don Mincher, former UAB basketball player Oliver Robinson and from the Old Timers category former Troy quarterback Sim Byrd and former Auburn football player Jerry Wilson.

In The House

Tide sports add performers in early signing period

Strike up a conversation about recruiting in Alabama and "Julio Jones" is likely the first subject. But as talented as the Foley High School football star is, he was not on the radar screen of most Crimson Tide coaches. Football, yes. But Bama has a lot of other sports, and most of them were busy signing up top-ranked performers in the early signing period in November.

After football, the most-watched sport is men's basketball, and Coach Mark Gottfried and his staff got the job done for Bama basketball.

The Crimson Tide signed the three players who had committed to Alabama—forwards JaMychal Green and Tony Mitchell and guard Andrew Steele, brother of Tide senior point guard Ronald Steele.

Alabama ranked 12th in the nation and third in the Southeastern Conference, according to the experts at Scout Media. UCLA was judged to have the nation's number one class, followed by Ohio State and Georgetown. Among SEC teams, Florida ranked number 8, Mississippi State 10, Bama 12, Kentucky 13, and LSU 18.

The only "news" in men's basketball recruiting this year turned out to be two who got away. Alabama lost out to LSU for Texas star J'Mison Morgan. Bama probably did not get in on Xavier Gibson of Dothan Northview until too late and Gibson selected FSU.

"We're very excited about our class," said Gottfried. "I think we've addressed some specific needs for our team. I think we have three very talented basketball players who are also very high quality individuals, which stays consistent with what we've tried to do from a recruiting standpoint."

As for the signees:

Green, 6-8, 225, has a five-star Scout rating and was two-time Class A player of the year. He was state tournament MVP in 2005. He averaged 23 points, 15.7 rebounds, and 7 blocked shots per game last year for Montgomery St. Jude. Gottfried mentioned his strength, size, feet, hands and toughness.

Steele, 6-3, 195, could have been a football recruit, too, after stellar play at John Carroll of Birmingham. He averaged 17 points, 10 rebounds and 5 assists as a junior. He has a four-star Scout ranking and is a National Honor Society student. Gottfried said he could play either point or wing.

Steele and Green have been teammates on the same AAU team, the Alabama Challenge.

Another Scout four-star is Tony Mitchell, 6-6, 190, from Swainsboro, Georgia. He averaged 19.0 points, 8.0 rebounds and 5.0 blocked shots as a junior in 2007. Mitchell was named the 2007 Georgia Sports Writers Association Class AA Player of the Year.

Here's a look at other sports early signees:

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Third-year Coach Stephany Smith added Ericka Russell, a 5-7 shooting guard from Tuscaloosa Northridge; Carmen McCoy, a

6-4 center from Leeds; Kayla Robinson, a 6-3 power forward from Raymond, Mississippi; and Candace Sykes, a 5-10 guard from St. Anne, Illinois, on the outskirts of Chicago.

Russell averaged 17.1 points per game, 6.8 boards, 4.7 assists and 4.5 steals per game as a junior. Russell has a justified reputation as a scorer, but Smith said she "can be relentless defensively."

McCoy averaged 12.7 points and 13.0 rebounds per contest as a junior. McCoy also added eight blocks a game and helped Leeds to two regional appearances in Mobile her freshman and sophomore seasons. Smith said she is more than just a "stereotypical big man" in that she has mobility and quickness.

Robinson led Raymond to a 32-7 mark averaging 18.7 points and 14 rebounds per game. Smith described her as a complete offensive player with the ability to be a presence around the rim.

Sykes was all-state as a junior as she averaged 19.6 points per game and 9.7 rebounds while adding 4.5 steals per game and 3.9 assists per contest. Sykes led her team to a 27-2 mark last season and to the round of 16 at the Super Sectional. The appearance at the sectional was a first for Moundville High School. "Candace is a very well rounded guard who can shoot the deep three with great accuracy," Smith said. "She has solid ball handling skills; athleticism and the ability to play at all guard spots as well as small forward."

BASEBALL

Alabama Baseball Coach Jim Wells added 13 signees, seven from high school and six from junior college. The signing class includes eight players (three from high school, five from junior college) from the state of Alabama.

"We feel like this is a top-notch recruiting class," Wells said. "We have some quality high school and junior college players, which will help us immediately. I think this is a very solid class. We signed some very good pitchers, both high school and junior college transfers that we expect to help us immediately."

Alabama inked three players from Shelton State Community College in Tuscaloosa and all three were key members on last year's team that won the Alabama Community College State Championship and placed fifth at the Junior College World Series.

Here is a look at the signees:

Matt Baca, 6-3, 245, is a first baseball (bats right, throws right) from Stony Point High School in Round Rock, Texas. A three-year football and baseball letterman and academic all-district selection, he led his team with 28 hits last year. He plays summer ball for the Austin Slam and hit .575 (75-for-137) with six home runs and 60 RBI. He had a 25-game hitting streak.

Taylor Dugas, 5-9, 165, outfielder (L-L), Teurlings High School in Lafayette, Louisiana, is a three-year starter and three-year all-state player entering his senior season. He has a .457 career batting average with nine home runs and 129 RBI. As a pitcher he is 21-5. He is also his school's starting quarterback in football.

Scott Hays, 5-10, 175, pitcher (L-L), Odessa College, Round Rock, Texas, led his team to a 31-17 overall record and third-place finish in the Western Junior College Athletic Conference in 2007. As a freshman, Hays was 6-4 with a 6.29 ERA. Hays pitched in the 2007 Texas Junior College All-Star game.

David Head, 6-3, 180, pitcher (L-L), Chattahoochee Valley in Phenix City, Ellenwood, Georgia, led his team to a 41-17 overall and 19-11 conference record last year. He had a 5-3 record and 3.13 ERA in 15 games. He worked 74 2/3 innings and allowed 74 hits, 40 runs and 26 earned runs, with 27 walks and 55 strikeouts.

Brandt Hendricks, 6-1, 195, catcher-outfielder (R-R), Jay, Florida, is beginning his fifth season with the baseball program and fourth as a starter. He has compiled a .391 career batting average with 12 home runs and 106 RBI. As a pitcher he is 16-5 with a 1.93 ERA and 208 strikeouts against 68 walks. He was 8-1 last year. He has been all-state two years and finished fifth in voting for Florida's Mr. Baseball last year. He is also a starting quarterback on the football team and guard on the basketball team and a four-year letterman in both sports.

Clay Jones, 6-2, 205, first base-catcher (R-R), Shelton State, Brent, was one of the top junior college hitters in the nation last year with a .376 average with six home runs and 57 RBI in 60 games. He was drafted by the Milwaukee Brewers. He also compiled a .557 slugging percentage and led the team in hitting, at-bats, hits, doubles (16) and RBI. He had 24 multi-hit games. He was 10-18 (.556 average) at the JC World Series and was all-tournament. He was valedictorian of his Bibb County High class.

Craig Kimbrel, 6-1, 200, pitcher (R-R), Wallace State in Hanceville, Huntsville, was drafted by the Atlanta Braves. He led Wallace State to a 40-10-1 record and first place finish in the Northern Division. He was 8-0 with three saves and a 1.99 ERA. He had 78 strikeouts and 30 walks. Opponents batted only .140 against him.

Adam Morgan, 6-1, 170, pitcher, (L-L), Kell High, Marietta, Georgia, has played on four national championship. As a 16-year old, he was a member of the AAU 16-and-under National Championship team that compiled an astounding 90-6 (.938) record. He also played on three World Wood Bat Association (WWBA) National Championship teams, winning titles in Jupiter, Florida, Fort Myers, Florida, and Atlanta. He also played for the East Cobb Yankees, runner-up at the 2007 Connie Mack World Series. He threw a complete-game shutout and struck out 12 in a playoff win over the defending state champions last spring.

Kent Myer, 6-0, 180, infield-outfield (R-R), Jackson, is a three-year starter at third base. He was all-state last year and is a pre-season All-America who was invited to play in the Under Armor High School All-Star Game in January. He has a career batting average of over .400 and 20 home runs, 66 RBI. He participated in the 2007 San Diego Padres East Coast Professional Showcase at Joker Marchant Stadium in Lakeland, Florida, and batted .444 (4-for-9) with an inside-the-park grand slam homer. As a junior he batted .525 with 11 home runs and 28 RBI, scored 53 runs, had 22 stolen bases. He had 14 doubles and three triples.

Adam Scott, 6-2, 175, pitcher (R-R), Shelton State, Hueytown, plays for former Alabama All-America and Major League pitcher Bobby Sprowl at Shelton State. He helped Shelton State to a 43-17 overall record and 24-6 conference mark en route to the JC World Series and fifth place national finish. As a freshman, Scott posted a 2-5 record with two saves and a 4.27 ERA in 29 appearances. In 52 2/3 innings, he allowed 47 hits, 40 runs and 25 earned runs, with 31 walks and 64 strikeouts. He prepped at Hueytown, where he

helped his team to two state playoff berths.

Jonathan Smart, 6-0, 165, pitcher (L-L), Shelton State, Tuscaloosa, was a first team Junior College All-America for his part in the Shelton State's great run in 2007. As a freshman, Smart compiled a 10-2 record with a 1.76 ERA in 17 starts. In 102 1/3 innings, he allowed 81 hits, 35 runs and 20 earned runs, with 13 walks and 88 strikeouts. He issued only two walks and compiled an 18.5-to-1 strikeout to walk ratio in his last 31 innings. He finished first in the state in ERA (1.76). He was a four-year letterman at Paul W. Bryant High in Tuscaloosa.

Troy Sutherland, 6-5, 225, pitcher (R-R), Bob Jones High, Madison, is attending Alabama on an academic scholarship. As a junior, he pitched 34 innings and compiled a 1.02 ERA. He also played for the Bama Bombers. He also played for the East Coast Grays. He has attended many showcases. In 2006, he was the Team One South Showcase "Rookie of the Year" with a 3.28 ERA in 36 2/3 innings. He was also a member of the 2006 Puma National Team. He also was a standout football player for his high school team.

Jade Todd, 6-2, 185, pitcher (L-L), Shady Valley High, Birmingham, plays for his uncle, Kevin Todd. He is rated a four-star prospect by Baseball America. He has compiled a 26-9 (.743) record and 300 strikeouts in his prep career. He also has a .440 career batting average with nine home runs and 40 doubles. He was first team all-state as a junior, one of only two juniors to make the 6A squad. Last year he had a 7-4 record with six saves and a 2.86 ERA. He had 142 strikeouts. At the plate, he batted .468 with 10 home runs and 24 doubles. At the East Coast Showcase in Lakeland he had five strikeouts in three scoreless innings. His father, Rex, played at UAB; his uncle, Kevin, played at Montevallo; and his cousin, Fuller Smith, plays at Ole Miss.

SOFTBALL

Coach Patrick Murphy added five signees in the early period, including two from Tuscaloosa.

Bama softball signees are Olivia Gibson, a catcher for Tuscaloosa Academy; Jazlyn Lunceford, first baseman-outfielder from Tuscaloosa County; Kendall Dawson, a catcher from Plant City, Florida; Jennifer Fenton, a centerfielder from Kennesaw Mountain High in Marietta, Georgia; and Cassandra Reilly-Boccia, an outfielder and first baseman from Yorktown, New York.

Gibson has helped Tuscaloosa Academy to three consecutive state championships. A right-handed hitter, Gibson has lettered all three years at Tuscaloosa Academy and has been named the team's Offensive MVP three times. She served as the team's captain the past two seasons. A three-time all-state selection, Gibson also earned all-tournament honors at the state softball championships in each of the last three seasons.

The 5-9 catcher hit .496 as a sophomore and .467 as a junior and finished her last two prep seasons with 14 home runs, 113 RBI and 108 runs scored. Gibson had 128 total hits, 43 extra-base hits and logged slugging percentages of over .750 in each of her last two seasons. She hit 11 homers in 2007.

Gibson won three letters in volleyball. Her cousin, Eric Dubose, pitched for Mississippi State and a first round Major League draft choice.

Also from Tuscaloosa, Jaz Lunceford was called by Murphy "as good as anyone defensively, either in the outfield or at first base, and her speed from the left side will be a great asset for us in our offensive game."

Lunceford earned honorable mention All-State accolades as a junior. She is a three-time West Alabama Softball All-Star. Lunceford

has been a captain of the softball team the past two seasons, was the Wildcats' MVP last year and earned the squad's Best Offense Award in 2007.

As a junior last season, the left-handed hitter recorded a .399 average with 49 runs scored and 21 stolen bases. She had 22 doubles, three triples and drove in 49 runs.

Dawson led her team to district runner-up finishes in 2005 and 2006 and regional finals appearances in her freshman and junior seasons. Dawson earned team Offensive MVP honors as a freshman and was named Defensive MVP as a sophomore.

As a junior, Dawson hit .559 with an amazing .926 slugging percentage while recording an on-base percentage of .600.

She also lettered in volleyball and soccer.

Dawson's sister, Mackenzie, is a pitcher for Eckerd College in St. Petersburg.

Fenton led her team to a regional championship in 2007 and regional runner-up finishes in 2004 and 2006. Kennesaw Mountain has qualified for the state sectionals in each of Fenton's three seasons.

She was named the Georgia High School Association Region 5A Player of the Year in 2007, has been a three-time GHSA First-Team All-State selection and has earned First-Team All-Region GHSA honors in each of her four seasons.

The Atlanta Journal Constitution named her 2005 "Hitter of the Year." She has been her team MVP three years and captain the past two seasons. She holds five school records—batting average (.465), on-base percentage (.531), hits (201), stolen bases (96) and runs scored (144).

She also lettered in track (record holder in 100-meter dash) and basketball. Her father played football at Maryville College and her mother was on the volleyball team at Jacksonville State University.

The first New Yorker to sign with Alabama, Reilly-Boccia reminded Murphy "of a combination of Todd Helton and Don Mattingly. Her tremendous power from the left side will help us replace Dani Woods in our lineup. She will be a versatile defensive player who can help us in the outfield or at first base."

With Reilly-Boccia in the lineup, Yorktown captured league and sectional titles in 2007 and advanced to the quarterfinals of the New York state championship. The team finished with a 25-4 mark last season.

A three-time all-star, Reilly-Boccia earned first team all-state last year. She was named Hitter of the Year for her class in New York in 2006. As a first-baseman and outfielder, Reilly-Boccia led the Tri-County region in home runs in 2007 with 12. She was tops on her team in batting average, home runs, walks, slugging percentage and on-base percentage in each of the last three seasons.

She also played basketball.

MEN'S GOLF

Four high school seniors have to play golf at Alabama.

Olivia Gibson is Tuscaloosa signee with softball



File

They are Bud Cauley of Jacksonville Florida; Hunter Hamrick of Montgomery; Lee Knox of Augusta, Georgia; and Scott Strohmeyer of Auburn. Golfweek/Titleist ranks Hamrick number seven in the world in its latest boys' amateur ratings.

"We're really excited about this class," said Alabama Coach Jay Seawell. "It's an important class to us because we have six seniors on this year's team so if we're going to continue to be a year-in, year-out national contender and compete for championships, you've got to do that on the recruiting trail first. I think this is going to be one of those classes that is recognized nationally as one of the better classes. We're turning Alabama Golf into a program. That's our goal. We don't want to be a one-year or two-year success; we want to be good every year. These guys will help us out."

Golfweek ranks Cauley, who is home schooled, third in its rankings of collegiate commitments and signees and Hamrick number six. Golfweek ranks Knox 101st out of 300 golfers who had signed with or committed to sign with colleges and universities.

A three-time American Junior Golf Association Rolex Junior All-America, Cauley has international experience and his play includes making the USA Junior Ryder Cup team in 2006. He finished tied for third at the Junior Players Championship at Sawgrass Country Club. He is a three-time AJGA winner and has played on two Canon Cup teams.

Hamrick finished 18th at the Junior Players Championship. The Montgomery Academy golfer won the individual 3A state championship in 2004, 2005, and 2006. His golf has helped Montgomery Academy win five Class 3A state championships. Hamrick finished second in the state championships as a seventh grader and followed it by setting an Alabama High School Athletic Association record with his three straight individual championships as an eighth, ninth and tenth grader. Hamrick finished second in stroke play at the 2007 U.S. Junior Championship and was a 2005 U.S. Amateur qualifier. He has eight Top 10 AJGA finishes and five top 10 finishes on the Future Collegiate World Tour. He made the 2007 Rolex Junior All-American Team. He finished second in stroke play at the 2007 U.S. Junior Championship and has 13 tournament wins on the Southeastern Junior Tour.

He has graduated from high school and entered Alabama, but will not begin competing for the Tide until next fall.

Knox is a senior at Augusta Preparatory Day School and has been named to the GISA 4AAA all-region team the past three seasons. He led the Cavaliers to a second place finish at the 2007 GISA AAA state tournament. His father is Jeff Knox, a successful amateur golfer in Georgia.

Strohmeyer has helped lead Auburn High School to back-to-back 6-A state championship titles, transferring from Lee-Scott his sophomore year in time to help propel the team to the championship that year. He finished second individually as a junior at the 2007 state championships. An immediate success in golf, Strohmeyer played baseball growing up, culminating in 2003 when he and his Opelika teammates won the 2003 Babe Ruth World Series. His low round is a 62 and his low tournament competitive round is a 66.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Third-year Coach Mic Potter announced the signing of Brooke Pancake from Baylor High School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Pancake will bring some hefty credentials to The Capstone.

Pancake won the Tennessee State High School Championship the last four years, and is the only player ever to win the event in four consecutive years. Pancake holds the 18 and 36-hole scoring record in the Tennessee State High School Championship.

Pancake is ranked No. 26 in the class of 2008 by the American Junior Golf Association. She has finished in the top 10 in eight of her 15 AJGA tournaments over the past three years.

GYMNASICS

Sarah Patterson, in her 30th year coaching the Crimson Tide, signed three athletes in the early signing period. They are Julie Cotter, Ashley Priess and Geralen Stack-Eaton.

"I'm glad this day is finally here," Patterson said in announcing the trio. "All three of these ladies committed to Alabama so early in the process that it seemed like signing day would never get here. We are excited to have three young ladies of this caliber join our program. All three of them have tremendous physical gifts, but just as importantly they all are dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in all that they do."

In addition to committing to Alabama early, the Tide is the only school each of the three visited during the recruiting process.

All three athletes have competed as part of the United States National Team with Priess and Stack-Eaton currently pursuing a spot on the U.S. Team for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In fact, both Priess and Stack-Eaton signed their letters of intent the day they left for a national team training camp.

Ashley Priess is the sister of Bama junior Courtney Priess. A member of the 2006 United States World Championship, she finished 10th in the all-around in Denmark, helping the U.S. to the silver medal. She competed with current Alabama sophomore Kassi Price on the 2006 U.S. World Cup team in Lyon,



France where she won the balance beam and uneven bars. At the 2006 World Cup event in Ghent, Belgium Priess earned a silver and bronze medal in the balance beam and floor exercise respectively. Priess also earned a silver medal on balance beam and was seventh in the all-around at the 2005 Massilia Gym Cup in Marseilles, France.

Priess who is coached by Mary Lee Tracy at Cincinnati Gymnastics Academy, is a three-time U.S. Classic all-around champion, taking top honors in 2004, 2005 and 2006. At the 2006 U.S. Classic she was second in the floor exercise and third in the uneven bars and balance beam. She attends Lakota West High School.

Both Stack-Eaton and Cotter come from Parkettes, the same gym that produced NCAA Champion Kim Kelly, and are coached by Bill and Donna Strauss.

Stack-Eaton, a native of Horsham, Pennsylvania, was sixth in the all-around at the 2007 USA National Championships. As a member of the U.S. National Team she competed in the USA/Belgium dual meet in 2003, helping the United States to the win and taking the bronze medal in the all-around and floor exercise and silver medal in the balance beam. She also helped lead the U.S. to gold against Japan in 2002. She attends Bridgeway Academy.

Cotter, a native of Orefield, Pennsylvania, is a member of the Level 10 national team and earned silver in the all-around and vault and bronze on the uneven bars and floor exercise at the 2006 Level 10 National Championships. At the 2005 Cancun Classic she earned silver medals in all-around and in the uneven bars plus a gold medal on vault and bronze medals on balance beam and floor exercise. She attends Northwestern Lehigh High School, the same high school as Alabama legend Penney Hauschild.

WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

Speed is important in track and field. How's this for quick: New Alabama women's signee Betty Rotich won six national championships in a period of seven months. She joined Bama in January and will participate in spring events for Coach Sandy Fowler.

Rotich came to Alabama from Colby (Kansas) Community College. She was a six-time national junior college champion.

The Nakuru, Kenya native started with the 2006 NJCAA cross country national championship. In the 2007 indoor season she won the mile, 3,000 meter and 5,000 meter national championships and in the 2007 outdoor season she won the 5,000 meter and set a new NJCAA meet record in winning the 10,000 meter.

The All-America holds Colby school records in seven events.

Prior to joining enrolling at Colby Community College she won three NAIA national titles at Missouri Baptist.

VOLLEYBALL

Alabama Coach Judy Green added three prep stars to the Crimson Tide volleyball squad. They are outside hitter Ashley Frazier, middle blocker Leigh Moyer, and setter Stephanice Riley.

Frazier led Toledo (Ohio) Central Catholic High School to the 2007 Division II state championship. The four year letter-winner was all-state and district player of the year. She was co-captain of her team as a junior and senior.

The 6-1 National Honor Society student is also a basketball player.

Frazier plays club ball for Toledo Volleyball Club and led her team to three National tournament appearances from 2005-07. Prior to her time at Toledo Volleyball Club, Frazier spent two

years with Glass City Volleyball Club.

Moyer, a 6-2, senior, comes to The Capstone after a four-year stint at McIntosh High School in Atlanta. The two-time all-state performer led her team to the 2007 4A Georgia state championship. She was captain of her team.

Moyer plays club volleyball for A5 out of Atlanta and in 2007 her club team finished fifth in the USJOV National Tournament.

Riley had a stellar career at Assumption High School in Louisville, Kentucky. The 5-7 setter led her high school team to three consecutive state championships and a National Championship in 2005. Following her senior season, Riley earned a spot on the state and region all-tournament squads. Riley was also named to all-state second team.

Aside from her illustrious career at Assumption, Riley plays club volleyball for one of the most accomplished clubs in the nation in Kentucky Indiana Volleyball Academy (KIVA). During her career at KIVA, Riley led her team to three appearances in the national title match at the USA Junior Olympic National Championships in 2003, 2005 and 2007. The three-time USA Junior Olympic All-Tournament team member also placed third at the 2006 tournament. Riley also garnered MVP honors at the AAU National Championships in 2004, 2005 and 2007 and led her team to three AAU National Championships and one third place finish.

She is a National Merit Scholar.

MEN'S TENNIS

Alabama Coach Billy Pate has added three members to the Crimson Tide men's tennis team, one of them with an Alabama athletics background. Among the new signees is John Lewis, son of former Bama quarterback Walter Lewis. Also new with the Tide are Creighton Blanchard and Ricky Doverspike. All of the signees will enter Alabama in the fall.

Lewis, a native of Odenville, joins the Tide as the top ranked 18 and under player in Alabama and has finished as the number one player in his age group three consecutive years (2005-2007). Lewis was ranked the nation's 41st top prospect after having a breakout summer on the USTA national circuit.

A two-time USTA sportsmanship award winner and national runner-up for sportsmanship this past summer, Lewis has been one of the South's top players and has ranked in the top 10 on three different occasions with a high of number five. Lewis plans to major in Civil Engineering at The Capstone. Lewis has seen a steady climb in his improvement and his rankings since starting tennis at age 13. Lewis, a lefthander, has five younger siblings, three of which are competitive junior tennis players.

Blanchard, a native of Jacksonville, Florida, is ranked 114th in the nation among senior high school tennis players. A former top 10 player in the talent-rich state of Florida, Blanchard has been a standout at Bolles High School for three years and is in the top 10 per cent of his class academically. Blanchard served as the team captain last year and held down the number one singles and doubles position where he won the Florida 2A State championship. He has also been ranked as high as 62nd in the USTA boy's 16 and under rankings. Blanchard has enjoyed an outstanding junior career with numerous achievements including reaching the quarterfinals of the USTA National Clay courts in 2006.

Doverspike, a tall, rangy player from Duluth, Georgia, comes to the Tide as the nation's 48th ranked senior prospect. The senior, from Northview High School picked the Tide over



John Lewis, son of former Tide quarterback, joins Tide tennis team

File

Tennessee, Georgia Tech, Georgia and Penn State. Doverspike also starred on the baseball diamond as a pitcher. For his athletic achievements he not only earned a team MVP in tennis but was also honored with the Titan Award, the highest athletic accolade at his high school.

Doverspike comes from an athletic background as his father, David, played college football at North Alabama and his mom, Debi, played for the Georgia women's tennis team. His brother, David, is currently a sophomore on the men's tennis team at Appalachian State.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Alabama Coach Jenny Mainz added two players to join the team beginning next fall. They are Courtney McLane of Lawrenceville, Georgia, and Taylor Lindsey of Vestavia Hills.

McLane, a stand-out at Brookwood High School, was the Georgia State runner-up in 2006 and 2007 and led her team to three consecutive regional championships from 2005-2007. The two-time Player of the Year remains undefeated as the number one singles player for Brookwood under the guidance of her head coach and mother Angie McLane.

In her junior career McLane won the 2007 Peach State Junior Tennis Classic, the 2007 Southern Open and the 2007 Georgia Junior Qualifier in singles and doubles. To add to her list of accomplishments, the 29th ranked recruit by tennisrecruiting.net was a member of the Davis Cup team and held a number one ranking in Georgia. The 2006 Southern Open doubles champion ranked fifth in the Southeast and 56th in the nation.

Lindsey is one of Alabama's top junior tennis players. As a junior at Vestavia High School, she led her team to the Alabama 6A state team championship in 2007 and went on to become the state champion in singles and doubles. To add to her high school accomplishments Lindsey was selected the Alabama Tennis Player of the Year in 2006 and the Birmingham News Player of the Year in 2007.

Lindsey is currently ranked as the 56th top recruit by tennisrecruiting.net and is the second-ranked player in Alabama. During her stand-out junior career, the Alabama native won three Southern Designated in 2006. Lindsey made appearances in the semi-final matches of Super National Doubles in 2005 and Southern Closed and Peach State in 2007. She also made the finals in the 2005 National Open tournament.

She is a member of the National Honor Society.

Bama Makes Change

Tide brings soccer coach from Clemson

Don Staley had been the only Alabama soccer coach since the sport became part of the Southeastern Conference lineup. For 14 years Staley directed the Crimson Tide women's program. But after a disappointing 2007 season, Staley elected to resign. Bama made a national search for a replacement, and by the end of November had landed Todd Bramble.

Bramble, 40, has been head coach at Clemson for the past seven seasons. Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore said the search focused "on the top young coaches in the nation."

Bramble spent the last seven seasons as the head coach of the Clemson Lady Tigers. He led his team to the NCAA Tournament every season, reaching the NCAA Elite Eight once and the NCAA Sweet 16 twice. In addition, his teams have finished in the top 25 nationally five times and have placed in the top three in the Atlantic Coast Conference three times. Bramble had an 80-51-17 overall record and did not have a losing season at Clemson.

In 2007, Bramble led Clemson to the NCAA Tournament for the seventh straight year advancing to the second round before falling to Southeastern Conference foe 15th-ranked Tennessee, 1-0. The Tigers posted a 10-6-5 record with victories over 23rd-ranked Long Beach State and seventh-ranked South Carolina. Bramble's Tigers played nine ranked teams in 2007 and posted an impressive 8-2-1 home record. Three Tigers earned All-ACC honors and two players were recognized as ESPN the Magazine Academic All-District.

Bramble has 18 career wins over top 25 teams including two top-five wins on the road in 2004 when the Lady Tigers won at fourth-ranked Texas and fifth-ranked Texas A&M. It marked the first time in 20 years, since the men's soccer team did it in 1984, that a Clemson program defeated top-five teams in consecutive road games.

Bramble's teams have had an equally impressive record in the classroom as they have had on the soccer field. The Lady Tigers have posted a 3.0 or better cumulative team grade point average all 13 semesters that he has led the team and have recorded a 3.25 or better team GPA for the last seven semesters. In addition, each of the program's seven NSCAA Academic All-American selections played under Bramble.

Bramble said, "I look forward to meeting with the team and figuring out how we can build this program into a source of pride for the Alabama community as quickly as possible. I'm sure I will discover that many of the qualities that Coach Staley has instilled in the players will allow us to be successful in a short period of time."



Clemson University

Bramble served as the top assistant under Clemson Men's Soccer Coach Trevor Adair from 1995-99. The Tigers had three top-12 seasons and reached the NCAA Tournament Quarterfinals twice and the Sweet 16 three times in those five seasons. The 1998 team finished with a 22-2 overall record and a number-one final regular season national ranking and won the ACC Championship that season.

Prior to being an assistant men's coach at Clemson, Bramble also served under Adair as an assistant at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, from 1991-94. The 1994 Brown team advanced to the NCAA Quarterfinals.

Prior to joining Clemson as the head women's coach, Bramble was the head coach of the men's soccer program at Butler University in Indianapolis for the 2000 season.

Bramble has also coached at the international level, where he was an assistant coach for the United States under-17 national team that competed in the World Championships in 1999.

Bramble received a degree in business management from Mercer University in 1995. He was an all-conference goalkeeper at Mercer before spending one year in the National Professional Soccer League with the Memphis Rogues (1989-90). The native of Atlanta, Ga., is married to the former Cindy Rivard. The couple has two children, Cole (7) and Morgan (5).

Staley compiled a 135-128-12 record at the Capstone including a 9-10-1 record in 2007.

"Coach Staley's contributions to Alabama women's soccer will benefit the program for years to come," Moore said. "Don has been a stabilizing force for the soccer program for 14 years, and he has been a key factor in its remarkable growth over that period. Coach Staley's integrity and competitive spirit served as a great example to his student-athletes. I am thankful for his contributions and efforts, and I wish him the best in his future pursuits."

While at Alabama he coached 108 Academic All-SEC honorees and 14 All-SEC players including Libby Probst, the 2005 SEC Scholar Athlete of the Year. In 2007, freshmen Justine Bernier and Victoria Frederick were named to the SEC All-Freshman team. In 2004, Staley became only the fifth coach in NCAA soccer history to reach the 300-win mark. He had a career record of 324-257-38 in 23 years as a head coach at the collegiate level, including nine years (1985-93) as head coach at Radford University (where he coached both the men's and women's teams) before joining the Tide in 1993.

Staley, who was named head coach at UA in December of 1993, was the Dean of SEC women's soccer head coaches and one of only two coaches to have been in the league every season since the inception of women's soccer in 1994. He won three SEC Western Division titles (1995, 1997 and 1998) and took the Tide to its only NCAA Tournament appearance in 1998. Staley was selected by the league's coaches as the SEC Coach of the Year in 1994 and 1998. ■

2007 ALABAMA WINTER SCHEDULES

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Nov. 9	Troy	7:00
Nov. 13	@ Mercer	6:30
Nov. 19	Belmont	7:00
Nov. 23	Southern Miss	7:00
Nov. 28	@ Texas A&M	8:00
Dec. 1	SE Louisiana	1:00
Dec. 5	Georgetown	6:00
	@ Birmingham	
Dec. 8	Nicholls State	Noon
	LAS VEGAS CLASSIC	
Dec. 17	Wofford	7:00
Dec. 19	Texas Pan-American	7:00
Dec. 22	Missouri State @ Las Vegas	7:00
Dec. 23	Purdue or Iowa State	9:30
	@ Las Vegas	
Dec. 29	George Washington	6:00
Jan. 1	Clemson	3:30
Jan. 4	Chicago State	7:00
Jan. 8	Florida	TBA
Jan. 13	@ Arkansas	TBA
Jan. 16	@ Georgia	TBA
Jan. 19	Mississippi State	TBA
Jan. 26	Auburn	TBA
Jan. 29	Tennessee	TBA
Feb. 2	LSU	TBA
Feb. 6	@ Mississippi State	TBA
Feb. 9	@ Kentucky	Noon
Feb. 13	Ole Miss	7:00
Feb. 16	@ South Carolina	6:00
Feb. 24	@ Auburn	TBA
Feb. 27	Arkansas	TBA
March 1	@ Ole Miss	TBA
March 5	@ LSU	TBA
March 8	Vanderbilt	6:00
March 13-	SEC Tournament	
March 18	@ Atlanta	

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Nov. 10	Tulane	TBA
Nov. 13	@ Samford	7:30
Nov. 18	Arkansas State	TBA
Nov. 23-	Junkanoo Jam @ Grand Bahamas	
Nov. 24	(Eastern Michigan, NC State, Washington State)	
Nov. 28	@ Belmont	7:00
Nov. 30	@ Tennessee Tech	7:00
Dec. 5	Louisiana Tech	TBA
Dec. 9	St. Mary's	TBA
Dec. 15	@ UT-Chattanooga	1:00
Dec. 17	Alabama A&M	TBA
Dec. 20	Hampton	TBA
Dec. 22	Jacksonville State	TBA
Jan. 2	East Tennessee	TBA
Jan. 5	SE Louisiana	TBA
Jan. 10	South Carolina	TBA
Jan. 13	@ Florida	1:00
Jan. 17	Arkansas	TBA
Jan. 20	@ Georgia	4:00
Jan. 27	Auburn	TBA
Jan. 31	@ Mississippi State	7:00
Feb. 3	@ Ole Miss	TBA
Feb. 7	LSU	TBA
Feb. 10	Vanderbilt	TBA
Feb. 14	@ Auburn	6:00
Feb. 17	@ Kentucky	Noon
Feb. 21	Tennessee	TBA
Feb. 24	Ole Miss	TBA
March 2	@ Vanderbilt	2:00
March 6-9	SEC Tournament @ Nashville	

GYMNASISTICS

Date	Opponent	CT
Jan. 11	Illinois	7:30
Jan. 18	@ Auburn	7:00
Jan. 25	@ Kentucky	6:00
Feb. 1	Georgia	7:30
Feb. 8	Arkansas	7:30
Feb. 22	@ LSU	7:00
Feb. 29	Florida	7:30
March 7	@ Stanford	TBA
March 9	@ UCLA	2:00
March 14	Penn State	7:30
March 21	Auburn	7:30
March 29	SEC Championships @ Duluth, Ga.	
April 12	NCAA Regionals TBA	
April 24-26	NCAA Championships @ Athens, Ga.	

SWIMMING & DIVING

Date	Opponent	CT
Oct. 13	Georgia Tech, Clemson, FSU @ Atlanta	Noon
Oct. 26-27	@ SMU Classic (W)	6:00
Nov. 2	LSU (M&W), Vanderbilt (W)	4:00
Nov. 10	Delta State, Centenary @ Athens, Miss.	2:00
Nov. 30-	Ohio Diving Invitational	All Day
Dec. 2	@ Columbus	
Nov. 30-	Alabama Classic	
Dec. 2	(Swimming only)	
Jan. 19	Kentucky	1:00
Jan. 26	South Carolina, Georgia @ Columbia	11:00
Feb. 20-23	SEC Championships @ Tuscaloosa	
March 1	Bulldog Invitational @ Athens	
March 8	Auburn Last Chance	
March 14-18	NCAA Zone Diving @ Auburn	
March 20-22	Women's NCAA @ Columbus, Ohio	
March 27-29	Men's NCAA @ Federal Way, Wash.	
	(All times tentative)	

2008 ALABAMA SPRING SCHEDULES

BASEBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Feb. 22	Cal-Poly	6:30
Feb. 23	Cal-Poly	4:00
Feb. 24	Cal-Poly	11:00
Feb. 28-March 1	FRISCO TOURNAMENT @ FRISCO, TEXAS (Teams TBA)	
March 2	@ UT-Arlington	1:00
March 4	Troy @ Montgomery	6:30
March 5	Troy	6:30
March 7	Youngstown State	6:30
March 8	Youngstown State	4:00
March 9	Youngstown State	2:00
March 11	@ North Alabama	6:00
March 12	Samford	6:30
March 14	@ Kentucky	3:00
March 15	@ Kentucky	1:00
March 16	@ Kentucky	Noon
March 18	New Orleans	6:30
March 19	New Orleans	6:30
March 21	Vanderbilt	6:30
March 22	Vanderbilt	4:00
March 23	Vanderbilt	2:00
March 25	Jacksonville State	6:30
March 26	@ Jacksonville State	6:30
March 28	Ole Miss	6:30
March 29	Ole Miss	4:00
March 30	Ole Miss	2:00
April 1	UAB	6:30
April 2	UAB @ Hoover	TBA
April 4	@ LSU	7:00
April 5	@ LSU	3:00
April 6	@ LSU	1:00
April 8	Mississippi Valley State	6:30
April 9	SE Louisiana	6:30
April 11	@ Tennessee	6:00
April 12	@ Tennessee	3:00
April 13	@ Tennessee	1:00
April 16	Southern Miss @ Pearl	7:00
April 18	Mississippi State	6:30
April 19	Mississippi State	4:00
April 20	Mississippi State	2:00
April 22	Lipscomb	6:30
April 23	@ South Alabama	TBA
April 25	Auburn	6:30
April 26	Auburn (FSN TV)	3:00
April 27	Auburn	2:00
April 29	@ Samford	6:00
May 2	@ Arkansas	6:35
May 3	@ Arkansas	2:05
May 4	@ Arkansas	1:05
May 9	Florida	6:30
May 10	Florida	4:00
May 11	Florida	2:00
May 15	@ Georgia	5:30
May 16	@ Georgia	5:30
May 17	@ Georgia	2:00

MEN'S GOLF

Date	Event
Feb. 17-19	John Hayt Intercollegiate @ Jacksonville, Fla.
Feb. 29-March 2	Puerto Rico Classic @ Rio Mar Beach
March 14-16	EZ-Go-Schenkel @ Statesboro, Ga.
March 24-26	US Collegiate @ Atlanta
April 7-8	Morris Williams @ Austin, Texas
April 18-20	SEC Championships @ Sea Island, Ga.
May 17-19	NCAA East @ Chattanooga
May 30-June 2	NCAA Championships @ West Lafayette, Ind.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Date	Event
Feb. 24-26	Lady Puerto Rico Classic @ Rio Grande
March 9-11	Central Florida Invitational @ Orlando
March 14-16	LSU/Cleveland Classic @ Baton Rouge
March 21-23	Liz Murphrey @ Athens, Ga.
April 4-6	Crimson Tide Classic @ Ol' Colony
April 18-20	SEC Championships at Loudon, Tenn.
May 20-23	NCAA Championships @ Albuquerque, N.M.

SOFTBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Feb. 8-10	HAMPTON INN BAMA BASH (Purdue, Jacksonville State, South Alabama)	TBA
Feb. 13	McNeese State	5:00
Feb. 14	Georgia Tech	7:00
Feb. 15-17	HAMPTON INN CRIMSON CLASSIC (Georgia Tech, Middle Tennessee, New Mexico)	TBA
Feb. 22-24	FUN IN THE SUN TOURNAMENT @ Miami (Connecticut, Florida International, Illinois)	TBA
Feb. 29-March 1	WASHINGTON CLASSIC @ Seattle (Washington, Idaho State, Portland State, Nevada)	TBA
March 6	(Washington, Idaho State, Portland State, Nevada)	6:30
March 8	Tennessee (2)	1:00
March 9	Tennessee	1:30
March 12	Florida (2)	5:00
March 15	@ Mississippi State (2)	1:00
March 16	@ Mississippi State	1:00
	U-T CHATTANOOGA ROUND ROBIN	
March 19	Kent State	2:00
March 19	U-T Chattanooga	6:00
March 21	@ Kentucky	6:00
March 22	@ Kentucky (2)	1:00
March 25	UAB	6:30
March 29	Ole Miss (2)	1:00
March 30	Ole Miss	1:30
April 2	@ Samford	6:30
April 5	LSU	1:30
April 6	LSU	6:30
April 10	@ Troy	6:30
April 12	@ Auburn (2)	1:00
April 13	@ Auburn	1:00
April 15	USA Olympic Team @ Birmingham Liberty Park	TBA
April 17	@ Arkansas (2)	5:00
April 19	South Carolina (2)	1:00
April 20	South Carolina	1:30
April 23	Samford	6:30
April 29	DEPAUL ROUND ROBIN @ Chicago	
May 3	DePaul	1:00
May 4	Northwestern	3:00
May 8-10	@ Georgia (2)	1:00
	@ Georgia	1:00
	SEC Tournament @ Baton Rouge	

MEN'S TRACK

(Indoor)	Event
Jan. 18	@ Notre Dame Invitational
Jan. 26	@ Boise State
Feb. 1-2	@ Kentucky
Feb. 8-9	@ Notre Dame
Feb. 16	@ Washington
Feb. 29-March 2	SEC @ Fayetteville, Ark.
March 7-8	Last Chance @ Notre Dame
March 14-15	NCAA @ Fayetteville, Ark.
	(Outdoor)
March 27-30	Alabama Relays
April 4-5	@ Stanford
April 5	@ Auburn
April 12	@ Arizona State
April 24-26	Drake Relays
May 2-3	@ Des Moines, Iowa
May 15-18	@ Ole Miss
June 11-14	SEC @ Auburn
	NCAA @ Des Moines, Iowa

WOMEN'S TRACK

Date	Event
(Indoor)	
Jan. 11-12	@ Kentucky
Jan. 18-19	@ Clemson
Feb. 8-9	Adidas @ Nebraska
Feb. 15-16	Iowa State Invitational
Feb. 29-March 2	SEC @ Fayetteville
March 7-8	Last Chance @ Notre Dame
March 14-15	NCAA @ Fayetteville
	(Outdoor)
March 27-30	Alabama Relays
April 4-5	@ Stanford
April 9-12	Sea-Ray Relays @ Knoxville
April 18-19	Vanderbilt Invitational
April 24-26	Drake Relays @ Des Moines, Iowa
May 3	@ Ole Miss
May 15-18	SEC @ Auburn
June 11-14	NCAA @ Des Moines, Iowa
	(All times tentative)

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Date	Opponent	CT
Jan. 15-20	HAWAII CLASSIC	
Jan. 27	Southern Miss	1:00
Jan. 27	Samford	TBA
Feb. 2	@ UNC-Charlotte	1:00
Feb. 3	@ Furman	Noon
Feb. 9	Louisville	1:00
Feb. 10	Rice	Noon
Feb. 16	@ Iowa	Noon
Feb. 23	@ Oklahoma	TBA
Feb. 29	@ LSU	3:00
March 2	@ Arkansas	Noon
March 7	Mississippi State	3:00
March 9	Ole Miss	1:00
March 15	Houston	Noon
March 21	@ Kentucky	1:00
March 23	Vanderbilt	1:00
March 28	@ Georgia	4:00
March 30	@ Tennessee	1:00
April 4	South Carolina	4:00
April 6	Florida	1:00
April 12	@ Auburn	TBA
April 18-20	SEC Championships @ Knoxville, Tenn.	
May 15-26	NCAA Championships @ Tulsa, Okla.	

MEN'S TENNIS

Date	Opponent	CT
Jan. 10	@ Hawaii	1:00
Jan. 17-21	SEC Indoors	
	@ New Orleans	
Jan. 26	Troy	10:00
Jan. 26	Southern Miss	3:00
Feb. 3	Furman	10:00
Feb. 3	Georgia State	3:00
Feb. 8	@ Cal-Irvine	1:00
Feb. 9	@ Pepperdine	1:30
Feb. 15-18	ITA National Indoors @ Seattle	
Feb. 24	Indiana	1:00
Feb. 29	LSU	1:00
March 2	Arkansas	1:00
March 7	@ Mississippi State	2:00
March 9	@ Ole Miss	1:00
March 13-16	Blue-Gray @ Montgomery	
March 21	Kentucky	2:00
March 23	@ Vanderbilt	1:00
March 28	Georgia	3:00
March 30	Tennessee	1:00
April 4	@ South Carolina	2:00
April 6	@ Florida	1:00
April 9	UAB @ Samford	Noon
April 9	@ Samford	5:30
April 12	Auburn	5:00
April 18-20	SEC Championships @ Sea Island, Ga.	
May 15-26	NCAA Championships @ Tulsa, Okla.	

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